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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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PREFACE

TO

SCRIPTURE HELP.

The want of a plain Tract, cheap enough to be easily procured, and yet sufficiently full to be useful to those who are beginning to read the Bible, induced the writer to set about this little work. His first design was only to write a tract of a few pages, but he was led on by degrees, even in the first edition, to a much greater length than he originally intended. He has been encouraged by the favourable reception of that edition (of which 2200 were sold in two or three months) to revise the whole work, and introduce several additional chapters; particularly those which, as he stated in his former edition, he had omitted for the sake of brevity.*

His objects have been, first to direct the reader's attention to THE BIBLE: to lead him dilligently to study the pure word of God, and to point out the vast importance of seeking the help of the Holy Spirit. He has next endeavoured to add such hints as might assist the reader to study practically and profitably; give him clear views of the various parts of divine truth, and remove apparent difficulties. The most important points to be attended to, are then summed up in a few practical rules, and the whole is concluded with some scripture prayers, a very brief chronological table, and some general remarks on the history of mankind and the church of God.

Although much has been wisely and usefully done to illustrate the Bible by commentaries, yet it is evidently of great importance, that it should not be chiefly studied through the works of uninspired authors. There is a majestic authority, an unaffected and beautiful simplicity and plainness in the word of God, which speaks more powerfully to the heart, than the most laboured expositions. On this account, the writer has been anxious to excite his readers to study, more constantly, with fervent prayer, the volume of the scriptures, without continually going to other works to guide them in reading it, and thus to take their religious sentiments from the fountain head. The writer from his heart embraces that great protestant principle, that it is each man's duty and privilege to read the Bible *for himself*; and that important truth expressed in the sixth Article of the Church of England, that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." He also fully assents to what is stated in the excellent church

*His extension of the plan, having necessarily increased the price, an Abridgment of the present edition has been published for the use of the poor, 10,000 copies of which have been sold whilst this was passing through the press.

homily on this subject, "That man's human or worldly wisdom, or science, is not needful to the understanding of scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and dilligence do search therefor."*

The Bible is in many respects its own interpreter; it contains in itself, the key which will open its own treasures; and it is hoped, that the following pages may assist in pointing out this key to the reader.

As the writer aimed rather to furnish a useful work, than to obtain credit for originality, he has freely borrowed from others whatever appeared likely to promote his object. He desires particularly to acknowledge his obligations to Jone's Scripture Directory, for many observations in the fourth chapter. He wishes also to express his thanks to several friends who have kindly favoured him with their remarks on the former edition. To one, he is more especially indebted for some important suggestions, several corrections, and two or three valuable notes.

Many imperfections will doubtless still be discovered in this work, and should another edition be called for, and the writer's life be spared, he will be glad to rectify any errors that may be pointed out to him through the medium of the publisher.

Reader, join in praying that it may please the great HEAD OF THE CHURCH, to bless this and every attempt, to lead men to the study of that book, which is so peculiarly HIS OWN. E. B.

Norwich, January 1816.

*The whole of this Homily, which may be had separately, well deserves attention.

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SCRIPTURE HELP.

CHAPTER. I.

Value of the Bible.

SUPPOSE a person compelled to quit a foreign country, were invited to return home to receive a large possession which his father had promised him. Suppose he is entirely unacquainted with the road he has to go, but knows that it is often rugged, difficult and dangerous; that there are also many false guides to mislead him, and many enemies to encounter: and that thus he will be exposed not only to the loss of the promised possession, but of every thing he has, and even life itself. What would be such a person's first inquiries? Where can I get a sure direction? Is there any protector who can defend me from mine enemies? With what delight he would hear, "your father has given you a plain, full, and particular direction, and an all-sufficient protector." How dilligently he would be looking at this direction as he went along, and how entirely he would trust his Protector.

This journey is the Christian's life: God is his father: heaven is his home: eternal bliss is the promised possession: Christ is the all-sufficient protector, the captain of our salvation, who has himself gone the road and conquered every enemy, and who now guards and defends as many as commit themselves to him: and THE BIBLE, with the help of the Holy Spirit, affords a sure direction to God, to heaven, to everlasting bliss.

"The testimony of the Lord is *sure*, making wise the simple." By means of the Bible, God himself "directs your paths." In all important points, it is so *plain*, "that he who runs may read." It is also so *full* and particular, that you will find in it something adapted to remove your most perplexing doubts, and to guide you aright through your greatest difficulties. Its fullness speaks its divine author.

The Bible is altogether TRUE: "thy word," says Christ, "is truth." It is truth without any mixture of error." It is the source and the only unerring standard of all religious truth and knowledge. Men may deceive us, or be deceived themselves; our own minds and hearts may deceive us, and therefore we are told not to "lean to our own understanding; and not to trust our own heart;" but the Bible will never deceive us; it is truth that we may always depend and act upon. Hence it is called "a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths;" it renders the way to eternal life manifest and clear.

Some may say, how am I to know that the Bible is true? I will endeavor to tell you. The Bible is evidently an ancient book, written by different persons at different periods, and yet in all its parts promoting one great design. Bad men could not write a book so plainly condemning all sin. Good men would not have deceived mankind by pretending that an invention of their own was a divine revelation, especially when they were likely to get nothing by this deception, but reproach, imprisonment, torture, and death. Its doctrines and precepts are evidently superior to all human wisdom, and directly contrary to that corruption of human nature, which impostors would indulge, as the means of gaining their ends. The Bible points out a clear way to eternal life; a way honorable to God, suitable to the wants of man; whilst by the strongest arguments it promotes practical holiness, so that you cannot read the book without feeling that it is a holy book. It gives you an account of various *miracles* which could only have been performed by the power of

God, and which were wrought in the midst of vast multitudes for a purpose worthy of God. The religion of the Bible was at the time of its promulgation supported by these miracles; and has ever since continued in the world. There are various *prophecies* in the Bible, the completion of which shew its divine original. Those concerning Jesus Christ have in a great measure received their accomplishment: these were known to have been written long before his coming. The prophecies concerning Babylon were delivered many ages before they were fulfilled; and the fall and continued ruin of that great city, which at the time when the predictions were delivered no human sagacity could foresee, prove that they were dictated by the inspiration of God. Those prophecies also respecting the Jews which pointed out their dispersion and yet predicted their preservation as a distinct people, are openly fulfilling to the present day in the sight of all men.*

All these things prove that of old holy men of God "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i, 21. Hence it is expressly declared, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. iii, 16. By inspiration is here meant "such an immediate and complete discovery, by the Holy Spirit to the minds of the sacred writers, of those things which could not otherwise have been known, and such an effectual superintendency as to those matters which they might be informed of by other means, as entirely to preserve them from all error in every particular, which could in the least affect any of the doctrines or commandments contained in their writings." —*Scott.*

The evidence above stated has been admitted by the wisest men in all ages, as a sufficient proof of the truth and divine inspiration of the Bible, but they are not sufficient of themselves to produce that saving faith which is so much commended in the scriptures. Not only is the mind of him who possesses this faith completely convinced, but his heart is purified and his life changed. The grace of God has removed the pride and prejudices, which before prevented his seeing the excellence of the truth, and feeling its importance. Hence this faith is said to be "the gift of God." If you experience the power of this grace in thus leading you to see the truth in its glory, you will believe the Bible to be the word of God, with an evidence which you never felt before. It will be the evidence of manifest conviction; "he that believeth hath the witness in himself." The Bible, when accompanied by the influence of the spirit, "with a powerful and penetrating energy, alarms and pierces the conscience, discovers the thoughts and intents of the heart, convinces the most obstinate, and makes the most careless to tremble. With equal authority and efficacy it speaks peace to the troubled mind, and heals the wounded spirit." It expands the understanding, it leads men to delight in God, to desire to know him more and serve him better; it gives a meetness for the happiness of the heavenly world, and thus prepares man for an infinitely superior state of existence. All these considerations unite in one point, and they produce the complete conviction, that such a system, so pure, so animating, so sanctifying in its operations, so elevating in its effects, cannot proceed from any other source than "the Father of lights."

The Bible claims our attention on account of the *invaluable truths it contains.* It discovers to us things which the wisest of men in vain attempted to find out. It shows who is our Creator: his love to us, and what we have to do to please him. It plainly declares what should be our great care and concern in this life; it affords light to those in darkness, rest to the weary and strength to the weak, and opens to us the invisible realities of another world.

As all men have sinned—the Bible is above every thing valuable, since it is addressed to sinners, and discovers to us the person, character, and offices of Christ, the Saviour. This discovery, if the expression may be used, throws a splendour on the pages of the Bible. It is therefore particularly called "the word of Christ." When men feel themselves

*See Porteus's Summary of Evidences, and Paley's Evidences.

sinners, and discover their need of a Saviour, and find in Christ just that which they want, they see that there is an infinite value in every thing which relates to him and his salvation.

That important question, What must I do to be saved? is here then satisfactorily answered. Forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, reconciliation with God, peace of mind, the restoration of the divine image, and a solid hope of eternal life, are clearly set before us in the scriptures, and freely offered to our acceptance, through the mediation of a Saviour. Do you feel yourself sinful, and do you fear the wrath of God and mourn under the burthen of your sins? In the Bible you will find declared, the means which God hath appointed both for your pardon and your cure. There you will read that "God sent his son to be the propitiation for our our sins;" that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; that he "is the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," and that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. These things were written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, and that believing we might have life through his name." 1 Tim. i, 15. John xx, 31.

Thus you see the Bible has "God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its contents." There is a further value in the Bible which the real christian has experienced. He has found that *it is an unspeakable consolation in seasons of distress.* He is able to say with David, "This is my comfort in my affliction." In the loss of all that is valuable on earth, in contempt and ill usage from others, when tried, tempted, and weighed down by his sins, the christian has two resources; the throne of grace and the Bible. Though his heart may be nearly broken with grief, yet he can say, "why art thou cast down? O my soul, hope in God." The Bible has calmed his agitated mind, and given him even in his worst distress such a peace as he would not part with for all the world. "Thy statutes," says David, "have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage: unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine afflictions."—Again; the Bible is inexpressibly valuable, because *its truth endures for ever.* All in this world is changing and uncertain: where can we rest? where can we fix our feet and say this will never sink under me, this will abide for ever? "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."—"Heaven and earth," says Christ, "shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Here then is something that will be of value in every period and every state; it will be found true in the hour of death, at the day of judgment, and through eternity.

CHAPTER II.

The importance of habitually Studying the Bible.

The possession of a Bible, if rightly used, is one of the greatest blessings and advantages that can be conferred upon us. Every thing however depends upon the use we make of it. If a person had swallowed poison, the best remedy in the world would do him no good unless he took it. So it is here; your Bible will do you no good unless you use it. Nay, it would have been better never to have had a Bible, than to have one and neglect to use it; because the Bible is a talent entrusted to your charge, for the due improvement of which you must account—besides, to disregard it, as if it were of no value, is a high affront to that great God who gave it. Suppose a parent wrote a letter to a child at a distance, full of affectionate admonitions and kind promises, and that child never opened the letter, or only read a line now and then; what an unworthy part such a child would act;—just so are we acting

if we neglect that book, which our Heavenly Father has sent to us, his children.

I purpose to shew the importance of studying the Bible, frequently, patiently, and thoroughly, from the command of Christ : the character and conduct of pious men : the knowledge, practical benefits, and real happiness gained by it, and the ill effects of neglecting it—and then to answer some objections, and point out the danger of a neglect of the Bible. I know indeed there are many young persons, and others who have not the command of their own time, from whom so much cannot be expected as will be required from those who have more leisure. To such I would say, " still you may do something: cannot even *you* often find time for folly, or perhaps for sinful books or company, when you will not give time to the Bible. Let no excuse satisfy you, but such as you are convinced will stand good in the solemn day of account. It may indeed require much self-denial, when, wearied with the labours of the day, you retire at night to your room, to read, perhaps in the cold a portion of scripture; and again, to rise somewhat earlier for this purpose in the morning or to snatch a few moments in the middle of the day; but would you not do more than this to gain a great temporal good, and here is a far more important benefit, a spiritual, an eternal good to be obtained." Let all do the best they are able in their different circumstances. " If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." Let all therefore consider, that

1. *The study of the scriptures is plainly commanded by God and his Christ.* Thus Christ says : " search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of me ;—blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." And again, Paul says, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Solomon gives much the same directions when he says, " cry after knowledge, seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasure. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom." "He" then " that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches." Let us not live in the neglect of a plain command of Christ.

2. *It was the conduct of pious men.* It appears from the 119th Psalm, that David was continually studying the scriptures ; and he says of the righteous man, " his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." O that this were the character of all who call themselves Christians ; that they would not only read their Bibles, but continually meditate upon them and delight in them. Timothy had known the scriptures from a child. Apollos was mighty in the scriptures. What a solemn injunction St. Paul gives respecting his epistle to the Thessalonians—" I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." It is said that the first christians read the scriptures with great dilligence.

We cannot follow a better example. Remember then that this blessed book has been the daily study of the wisest and the best of men, of all the saints of God ever since it was written, and that it has constantly guided them through every temptation and difficulty till they have been received to the glory of God.

3. Continual study under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is *the only way to obtain a knowledge of the Bible.*

A thorough acquaintance with any subject cannot be acquired without great attention ; still less can a knowledge of religion, without much perseverance and study. It is well said, " the scriptures are a treasure of divine knowledge which can never be exhausted. The most learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore.—New light continually beams from this source to direct his conduct, and illustrate the works of God and the ways of men."—*Scott.*

4. *It is one great means of attaining the practical benefits which result from the religion it teaches, namely, conversion, faith, hope and sanctification.*—Hence when the Bereans " received the word with all readiness of mind, they

searched the scriptures *daily*, and therefore many of them *believed*." David says, "thy law is perfect *converting* the soul." Jesus Christ prays for his people, "*sanctify* them through thy truth, thy word is truth;" and Paul says, "what things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have *hope*. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord." And he sums up these benefits when he says, the scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Observe, too, how our Lord answers every temptation of Satan with a text of Scripture. Matthew iv. Reading the scriptures is one of the great means of bringing our souls near to God, and enjoying communion with him. "While in prayer, we speak to God: in the scripture, God speaks to us."

5. *This study also brings real happiness.* You have not found happiness in the world. How often have you been compelled to feel, if not to acknowledge, the vanity and emptiness of all worldly good: try, then, to find happiness in the Bible. You will not be disappointed there; it will lead you to that "fountain of living waters of which whosoever drinketh shall not thirst again. Great peace have they that love God's law." The Thessalonians received the word preached to them "with joy of the Holy Ghost." In hearing this word of Christ, you will often find your hearts like those of the disciples going to Emmaus, burning within you. As "faith cometh by hearing," you will not only be persuaded God's promises will be fulfilled, but will see your interest in them, and exult in the hope of boundless bliss beyond the grave. Christ says, "he that heareth my words and believeth in me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John v, 24.

Do not however be discouraged, if these practical benefits are not immediately obtained, or you seem not to make rapid advances in the divine life. Your progress may be real, though slow and hardly perceptible. Although the newborn babe daily receives nourishment yet it does not instantly grow up to manhood, but gradually passes through the stages of childhood and youth—so it is here. Be not disappointed, if reading the Bible should sometimes appear a task, and your corrupt nature should be ready to call it a dry, dull, and tedious study; still persevere in it, remembering that nothing valuable is gained without self-denial. The more constantly you read in a right spirit, the more comfort and pleasure, profit and happiness you will find.

When a man, by much patient study of his Bible, has taken his sentiments and principles simply from that source, he has the satisfaction of knowing I rest on a solid foundation; I did not take my opinions from this man or the other, but from the Bible alone; I have "thus saith the Lord" for the reason of the hope that is in me. Who can describe the value of this persuasion in the hour of temptation and trial.

6. There are, lastly, *very ill effects arising from the neglect of this study.* This is the reason why so many are ignorant of the first principles of christianity, hardly knowing that there is a Saviour, or having "heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." This is the cause why so many false and groundless notions prevail amongst us: for when we follow our own reasonings and neglect the scriptures, we must of necessity go astray. Ignorance of the scriptures is one great cause of error and vice. Matthew xxii, 29. This ignorance keeps you from much happiness and comfort: it is the indirect cause of many anxieties and great misery in this life: and what is far worse, it ruins your immortal souls. Christ says, "he that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him. The word which I have spoken shall judge him at the last day." John xii, 48. "My people," saith the Lord, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

Some, however, say, yes ; I am satisfied of the truth of all this ; but I am poor and unlearned: the Bible too is a large book, and when I begin to read it *I find many things which I cannot understand.* Let me, however, ask you, are you not every day labouring to provide for yourself and your family? Now in the beginning of the week, you do not say my labor is too difficult for me—I will sit down and do nothing ; because you know if you did, yourself and your family might suffer. But remember, the soul is of more value than the body.—Your soul will live forever ; it wants food, whereby it may be nourished up unto eternal life, and this food is to be obtained, under the divine blessing by patient labour in reading your Bible. Besides, you did not learn your trade at once, nor can you learn the whole truth contained in your Bible at once. The Bible is indeed a large book, but it consists of many small books ; each of these is complete in itself, such as Genesis, Matthew, &c.—Read one of these smaller books through, before you begin another, and by degrees (observing the rules hereafter mentioned) the most ignorant may gain a considerable knowledge of their Bibles. You may not thoroughly understand any part of the Bible at the first reading ; but what appears obscure or unimportant at one time, may be easy and of immense value at another.

Others say *I have not time to read my Bible.* I have enough to do in my daily occupation, without attending to any thing else. Ah! remember, you must give an account of all your time to God, and you will indeed give a wonderful account if you make it appear that those portions of time were misemployed, which were spent in reading your Bible. I appeal to your conscience, whether you do not often needlessly give time to things of far less importance, and however busy you may really be, the study of the Bible will not hinder, but help your business, by teaching you to go through it with a quiet and diligent spirit. Besides, you can always find time for eating and drinking, and sometimes for amusement; but is not the food of your soul of infinitely greater consequence? Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Many at the close of life have regretted their neglect of this book, but no one ever then repented of his attention to it. Do you not profanely despise God himself ; when you disregard this sacred volume, or imagine that it is not worth your while to peruse it carefully and frequently? Remember again, the eunuch was reading the scripture while travelling on the road, when he did not well understand it ; and you know how God rewarded his dilligence, by sending Philip to explain what he read, and to preach unto him Jesus. But are you indeed so busy? This then is the reason why you *should* read the Bible. You are like a man in the midst of a battle—this is your armour ; O do not throw it away, lest you be wounded and perish forever.

Others urge this objection, I would read the Bible but *I have not got one, I am too poor to procure it.* To such it may be answered, if you are really desiring a Bible, there are many opportunities for obtaining one at the present time at a cheap and easy rate. Should you be too poor to embrace any of these, make your wants known to those who can supply you. If you are as much in earnest to obtain food for your never-dying souls, as you are for your perishing bodies, you must hope that God will incline the heart of some kind friend to impart this gift to you. Let me say also to those to whom God has given property, can you dispose of your talents in a more useful way, than by assisting the poor to obtain Bibles? Should you ever rest satisfied, till your poorer neighbours have this invaluable treasure?

Some may perhaps be kind enough to read this tract to persons, who in reply to all that has been said, may answer, *I am unable to read the Bible myself ;* to such it may be said, you must make use of the best helps in your power. If you are thoroughly persuaded the knowledge of the Bible is not only an important duty, but a great advantage, you will make every effort, you will use every opportunity, to gain this knowledge. Hence, when persons have become really in earnest in religion, they have learnt even in

their old age to read their Bible, and happily for you at the present day there are means peculiarly favorable to this end, in the adult schools which are becoming so general. But if you cannot read the Bible, your children, neighbors, or friends, will surely be glad to read a chapter to you. You should also be diligent in attending public worship, where you may hear the Bible read. If a kind father had left a will, would you ever rest satisfied till you knew what it contained? Be, then, at least as much in earnest about your eternal welfare, as you are about those temporal concerns which most interest you.

Yet, after all that I have said, I fear many who have a Bible will disregard it, suffer it to lie unopened on the shelf, or consider it merely as a task book for their children. What shall I say to *you*, or how shall I engage you to attend to this great duty? I know the true reason why you neglect it: you love your sins, and you are afraid that the study of the Bible will either oblige you to forsake them, or make you more guilty, if you continue in them. But ah, be not deceived; what does Jesus Christ himself say? "*This is the condemnation*, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." John iii, 19. Your disregard of the Bible, instead of being an excuse, will be an evidence of your sin, an aggravation of your guilt, and will condemn you for ever. "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandments shall be rewarded." Prov. xiii, 13.—"How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation, spoken by the Lord and confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Heb. ii, 3. If the love of Christ does not constrain you, O let "the terrors of the Lord persuade you" continually to read your Bible, looking for Divine assistance, without which all your reading will be unprofitable.

CHAPTER III.

The Necessity of Divine Assistance to enable us properly to understand the Bible.

Of all the works of creation THE SUN is the most glorious and splendid, the most enlivening and useful: it not only enlightens the world, but cherishes and gives health and strength to all things; it causes universal joy and gladness of heart; it renews the face of the whole earth, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

So is the word of God: it is a bright and glorious light, shining in a dark world; but "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." John i. 5. The world lieth in darkness; men are dead in trespasses and sins, and while they continue in that state, they no more perceive the real glory of the Bible, than a blind man perceives the light of the sun, or a dead man its warmth. Hence we may learn the need of the help of the Holy Spirit. When this is given, "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear will live."

The necessity of divine assistance may be proved from

1st. *The express declarations of scripture.* When David prays, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," he shows his sense of the need of divine aid to enable us properly to understand the Bible. Christ says to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii, 3. He cannot discern the spiritual nature and glory of the gospel; he cannot see the excellency of the holiness of God, the goodness of the strict and spiritual precepts of the law, the justice of its awful sanctions, the malignity in sin which deserves eternal ruin, the infinite value of Christ, and the happiness

of being like him. Hence our Lord says, "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" John, vi, 44; and St. Paul says, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii, 14.

2d. *The promises of divine teaching.* Thus our Lord says to the Apostles, "when the spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth." John xvi. 13; and though this promise was, in the first place, peculiarly applicable to them, as it respected their divine mission, yet it comprehends the more lasting operations of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord says of this spirit, "the Father shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you FOR EVER." John xiv, 16. And he says, "they shall be *all* taught of God." John vi, 45. And again, it is said, "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." James i, 5.

3d. *The conduct of unbelievers.* The Israelites did not profit by the miracles they saw, and one reason was because the Lord had not given them an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear. Deut. xxix, 4. How often the Jews accused our Lord himself of being mad, and having a devil. John x, 20, viii, 48. How deaf were their ears, how hard their hearts, how blind their eyes, notwithstanding all the miracles which our Lord did amongst them, and the reason assigned is, it was not given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Matt. xiii, 11, &c. John xii, 37—40. The learned Athenians mocked Paul, and ridiculed the doctrine of the resurection of the dead. Acts xvii, 18—32, and how few wise, mighty, or noble among the Corinthians embraced the gospel at first. 1 Cor. i, 26, for the world by wisdom knew not God. 1 Cor. i, 21.

4th. *The experience of Christians.* How dark were the minds of the disciples respecting the prophecies concerning Christ, till he opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. Luke xxiv, 45. Lydia was just as ignorant and careless as other people, till the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul. Acts xvi, 14. God alone makes believers to differ from others, and they have nothing which they did not receive from him. 1 Cor. iv, 7. see also 2 Cor. iv, 6 and 1 John v, 20.

5th. *The prayers of believers prove the same necessity.* How earnestly David prays, "make me to understand the way of thy precepts, so shall I talk of thy wondrous works, and give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies; teach me thy statutes." The whole of the 119th Psalm completely shows how needful David thought divine teaching. See also Eph. i, 17, 18. Thus you see in how many various ways God has declared this truth, that it is necessary to have divine assistance to enable us properly to understand the Bible. In doing this, he has shown us that it is a point of great importance, and very apt to be neglected. It may perhaps be a new and strange doctrine to you, but do not on that account despise or disregard it; search the scriptures and you will find their testimony on this head decisive. When you are convinced of this, you will then earnestly implore the aid of the Holy Spirit.

How infinitely kind and condescending is that God who is thus willing to guide and teach his sinful creatures—"Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way." And shall we not seek this help? Settle it then, as a firm principle in your mind, that God alone can enable you profitably to understand and attend to his word, and be earnest in prayer for his assistance; "and if ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "Ask and you shall have, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

Thus the Holy Ghost is the great agent to enable us to understand the Bible, for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." It is his office not only to sanctify and comfort the church,

"but to take of the things of Jesus Christ, and to show them to us." The apostles themselves did not understand the meaning of the gospel, till they were taught by the Holy Ghost. Whenever, therefore, you open your Bible, never forget to pray that the spirit of God may open your understanding.

Though the degrees of light and grace communicated by the Holy Spirit to different persons are various, for "he divides to every man severally as he will; (1 Cor. xii, 11.) yet some general marks may be pointed out, by which we may ascertain whether we are in any measure partakers of it. The believer feels its influence in turning him from sin to God, and exciting him earnestly to seek the salvation of his soul, as the one great object of his life. The Holy Spirit produces in him humility of mind, and a willingness to receive instruction. He manifests to him the wisdom of God in the great doctrines of the Bible, "justification by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," and the necessity of "a new heart and a new spirit." He leads him earnestly to desire to see the character and glory of God, to enjoy his presence, and to be conformed to his likeness. He inclines the heart to love holiness because God is holy, and heaven because it is a holy place; and he gives an efficacy to the word, making it powerful to excite and promote every holy temper and disposition. He enables him to enter into this feeling, "thy testimonies are my delight;" so that the Bible is often a source of the greatest comfort, filling him "with joy unspeakable, and a hope full of glory." Reader! ask your own conscience, have I experienced any of these things? has the Bible been thus brought home to my heart? How can it be so, if you have never diligently and perseveringly sought the influence of this blessed guide and comforter!

Whilst the necessity of having this divine teacher is thus strongly insisted upon, the above statement clearly shows that it is not meant that the Holy Spirit guides to any new revelations, or any doctrines contrary to the revealed will and word of God; nor can we expect his guidance without prayer and the use of the other means and helps which God has given us for understanding his word. Such ideas do not proceed from the Spirit of God, but are the spirit of delusion and enthusiasm.

I purpose now to go very briefly through the Bible with you.

CHAPTER IV.

General Remarks on the whole Bible, and short Observations on each Book.

The word BIBLE means *book*, and the sacred volume is so called because it is the book of books—the best book. The word SCRIPTURES signifies *writings*. The Bible was not written at one time, or by one person, but consists of various parts, written at different times, by different men. It is divided into two testaments or covenants—the old and the new. As a testament, the Bible is the will of our gracious Redeemer, full of noble gifts and legacies, confirmed to us by the death of the Testator. Heb. ix, 16, 17, 18. As a covenant or agreement between God and man, the old covenant, the law is holy, just, and good; and the new covenant, the gospel, is full of grace and truth, the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The great promise of the old testament is a Saviour to come. The new shows us that this Saviour is come, and gives us another great promise, though this promise is not excluded from the old, viz. the promise of the Holy Spirit.

The old testament was chiefly written in the Hebrew language, and the new testament in the Greek.* The present

* The *Apocrypha*, sometimes bound up with the Bible, is no part of the word of God, nor has any divine authority. It was not till the year 1550, at a Council held at Trent, under the influence of Pope Pius IV. that any part of the apocrypha was publicly decreed to be a part of the word of God. It is evident, therefore, that its authority rests on a very different foundation to that of the scriptures. It can also be easily shown, that though there are in the apocrypha many admirable lessons of practical wisdom, yet it frequently contradicts the oracles of God.

authorised English Bible was translated out of the original languages in the reign of king James 1st. Where LORD is printed in capital letters, it is in the original Jehovah; and such words as are printed in Italics, are not in the original, but used by the translators to complete the sense in English. The old testament was written prior to the time of our Lord. The New Testament was written by the disciples and Apostles of Jesus Christ: and before the middle of the second century after Christ, the principal part of the books which compose it, were read in every Christian church. The books of the Bible when first written, were not divided into chapters and verses. This was a modern invention, useful in many respects, but the sense is frequently obscured by it. Thus, the 1st verse of the 2d Corinthians, 7th chapter, should be read along with the 6th chapter. In order to obtain a general view of the plan and connexion of any particular book, we should disregard this arbitrary division.

The new testament continually quotes, or refers to the old, and thus not only confirms it, but helps us to understand and improve it. I shall, therefore, at the end of the following observations on each book, point out some references, naming only the chapter and verse of the book. Thus, under Genesis, you will find—iii, 4. 2 Cor. xi, 3, meaning, that the 11th chapter of 2d Corinthians, 3d verse, refers to the 3d chapter of Genesis, 4th verse.

The first five books of the OLD TESTAMENT, sometimes called the Pentateuch, or *five books*, were written by Moses more than 3000 years ago, and are the most ancient writings in the world.

GENESIS signifies *creation* or *beginning*. It contains the history of about 2369 years. It makes known unto us, that there is but one God, the creator of all things. It describes the happiness of man in Eden—his fall—the promise of Christ, the seed of the woman—the deluge—how Noah and his family were saved in an ark—the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (afterwards called Israel,) and Joseph—and the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt. Observe in this book that two distinct classes of men begin in Cain and Abel, and you will find they have continued through all ages; I mean the church of God and the ungodly world. The saints, though few in number and despised of the world, are most dear to God. See his kindness to Abraham, and the amazing condescension and familiarity with which he treated him.

What a privilege it is to belong to that church which God regards as a peculiar favour. Take particular notice of the covenant God entered into with Abraham, that in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and see Gal. iii, 8—16, &c.

The 11th of Hebrews will give you a view of the motives and principles which animated the Patriarchs. In reading Genesis, you may discover traces of Christ, not only in the promises, but in the characters described, many of whom were types or figures of the Saviour.*

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* In the character of Joseph for instance, while we see an example of excellent conduct in a variety of situations, let us also endeavour to notice many signs of the Saviour. This is illustrated by Pascal in the following manner:—"*Jesus Christ* prefigured by *Joseph* the beloved of his father, and by him sent to visit his brethren, is the innocent person whom his brethren sold for twenty pieces of silver, and who by this means became their Lord, their Saviour, the Saviour of strangers, and of the whole world, which had not happened but for their plot of destroying him, making him an outcast, and selling him for a slave. *Joseph* was an innocent man in prison between two criminals; Jesus on the cross between two thieves. *Joseph* foretels deliverance to one of his companions, and death to the other from the same tokens; *Jesus Christ* saves one and leaves the other, after the same crimes. *Joseph* could only foretel: *Jesus Christ* performed what he foretold. *Joseph* requests the person who should be delivered, to be mindful of him in his glory; the man saved by *Jesus Christ*, intreats he will remember him when he comes into his kingdom." See Pascal's Thoughts on Religion, an impressive, and in many respects, valuable book.

Perhaps Pascal may have gone into more minute particulars than could be fully justified; yet it has doubtless pleased God to give in the history of the Old Testament many hints, marks, and footsteps of him who was to come. Almost every benefit and blessing will remind the believer whose heart is filled with the love of Christ, of the Saviour. The bread he eats, the house in which he dwells, the light and life he enjoys, and the way in which he walks, will all, not only bring Christ to his mind, but help him

I cannot conclude the observations on Genesis better than in the impressive words of a recent commentator:—"Reader, thou hast now before thee the most ancient and most authentic history in the world; a history that contains the first written discovery that God has made of himself to mankind: a discovery of his own being in his wisdom, power, and goodness, in which thou, and the whole human race, are so intimately concerned. How much thou art indebted to him for this discovery, he alone can teach thee, and cause thy heart to feel its obligation to his wisdom and mercy. God made thee and the universe, and governs all things according to the counsel of his own will. While under the direction of this counsel, thou canst not err; while under the influence of this will, thou canst not be wretched. Give thyself up to his teaching, and submit to his authority; and after guiding thee here by his counsel, he will at last bring thee to glory."

References in Genesis.

i, 1. Heb. xi, 3.—iii, 4. 2 Cor. xi, 3.—iii, 6. 1 Tim. ii, 14.—iv, 4. Heb. xi, 4.—iv, 8. 1 John iii, 12; Jude 11.—v, 24. Heb. xi, 5.—vi, 12. 1 Pet. iii, 20.—vii, 14. Heb. xi, 7; 2 Pet. ii, 5.—vii, 4. Matt. xxiv, 37, 38.—xii, 1. Heb. xi, 8.—xiv, 18. Heb. vii, 1.—xv, 6. Rom. iv, 3; James ii, 23.—xvi, 15. Gal. iv, 22.—xviii, 10. Heb. xi, 11.—xviii, 12. 1 Pet. iii, 6.—xix, 24. Luke xvii, 28, 29.—xix, 25. 2 Pet. ii, 6; Jude 7.—xix, 26. Luke xvii, 32.—xxi, 1, 3. Gal. iv, 28.—xxii, 1, 10. Heb. xi, 17; James ii, 21.—xxii, 18. Luke i, 55.—xxv, 22. Rom. ix, 10.—xxv, 33. Heb. xii, 16.—xxvii, 27. Heb. xi, 20.—xlviii, 15. Heb. xi, 21.—xlix, 10. John i, 49; Luke i, 32.—i, 24. Heb. xi, 22.

Exodus signifies *departure*, or *going forth*. It contains the history of 145 years. It describes the bondage of the Israelites—God's raising up Moses as their deliverer—the plagues of Egypt—the departure of the Israelites, and their passage through the Red Sea—their being fed with manna, having water given them from a rock—and the giving of the law from Mount Sinai.—How gracious God was to Israel, how dreadfully he punished his enemies, and what base returns Israel made to God. Israel is a picture of what we now frequently see. The 10th chapter of the first Corinthians will furnish you with a practical improvement of many events in this book. Here is contained the covenant of the Mosaic law, distinct from the covenant made with Abraham. (Gal. iii, 17.) Christ was prefigured by the rock that followed Israel, and the manna which fed them, and he was the Angel who conducted them. Moses was a type of Christ as a law-giver, mediator, deliverer, and intercessor; as the head of the church, as the guide and Saviour of Israel. The study of the mediation of Moses, will help us to understand the mediation of Jesus. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and their journey through the wilderness, are lively figures of our deliverance from the bondage of sin, and of our journey through this world's wilderness to the land of heavenly rest.

References in Exodus.

ii, 2. Heb. ii, 23.—ii, 11. Heb. xi, 24; Acts vii, 24.—iii, 2. Acts vii, 30.—xii, 7. Heb. xi, 28.—xiv, 22. 1 Cor. x, 2; Heb. xi, 29.—xvi, 15. John vi, 31, 49; 1 Cor. x, 3.—xvii, 6. 1 Cor. x, 4.—xix, 6. 1 Pet. ii, 9.—xix, 12. Heb. xii, 18.—xxiv, 8. Heb. ix, 19.—xxvi, 35. Heb. ix, 2.—xxxii, 6. 1 Cor. x, 7.

Leviticus is so called, because it treats of the laws, ordinances and offices of the *Levitical* priesthood. It describes sacrifices of various kinds; the nature of legal uncleannesses, and the means of purification from them—several solemn festivals, the punishment of Nadab and Abihu for irreverence. The epistle to the Hebrews is the best commentary on this book. The things here described are shadows of better things to come, even of Christ, and redemption through him.—The *burnt offering* shows us the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice of Christ once offered, whose blood cleanses from *all* sin. The

more to understand the blessings which *he* imparts to his people. And so, in reading the Bible, the Christian discovers almost innumerable memorials of Christ, and thus experiences more what it is to dwell in Christ and Christ in him, and can more easily adopt the language of St. Paul, "to me to live is Christ, and to die gain." It is communion with the Saviour that forms the distinguishing character of the real Christian, and which is seen in his life, by his having the same mind that was in Christ, and following his example.

meat offering shews us Christ as the spiritual food of our souls. The *peace offering* shows us Christ as our peace, bearing our sins, and reconciling us to God. The *sin offering*, part of which was burnt without the camp, represents Christ, our sin offering, dying for us without the gate of Jerusalem. The *trespass offering* equally points out the Saviour, whose blood alone can cleanse from the *least* sin. Christ is the sum and substance of all. In Christ behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world: in Christ behold all the sacrifices completed and abolished; all the shadows lost, in him, the substance. Behold in Aaron, anointed to this office, going before the people, interceding for them, obtaining the pardon of their sins and blessing them, a figure of your great high priest Jesus Christ. The washings and cleansings point out to us the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit. The oil is an emblem of his unction. The particular directions respecting worship, show us the vast importance of reverence and attention in all our worship. In the long, tedious, and painful train of sacrifices, behold also God's unalterable displeasure against sin, and learn to love that Saviour who has done away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and admitted you to the privileges of a better dispensation. The unclean could not enter the camp of the Lord, nor can the unconverted sinner enter the kingdom of God. Boyle observes, "the ceremonial law, with all its mystic rites, like the manger to the shepherds, holds forth, wrapped in his swaddling clothes, the infant Jesus."

The old testament gospel is well expressed in the following hymn, by Cowper:—

Israel, in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the gospel too;
The types and figures were a glass,
In which they saw a Saviour's face.

The paschal sacrifice,
And blood besprinkled door,
Seen with enlightened eyes,
And once applied with power;
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile the world to God.

The lamb, the dove set forth
His perfect innocence,
Whose blood of matchless worth
Should be the soul's defence;
For he, who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of his own.

The scape goat, on his head
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more;
In him, our surety seem'd to say,
Behold, I bear your sins away.

Dipt in his fellows' blood,
The living bird went free;
The type well understood,
Express'd the sinner's plea;
Describ'd a guilty soul enlarg'd,
And by a Saviour's death discharg'd.

Jesus I love to trace,
Throughout the sacred page,
The footsteps of thy grace;
The same in every age.
O grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light, vouchsaf'd to me.

References in Leviticus.

xii, 3, 4, 6. John vii, 22; Luke ii, 21, 24.—xiv, 4. Matt. 8, 4.—xvi, 14. Heb. ix, 13.—xvi, 17. Luke i, 10.—xviii, 5. Rom. x, 4, 5. Gal. iii, 12.—xix, 15. James ii, 1.—xix 14. Matt. xviii, 15; Luke xvii, 3.—xix, 18. Gal. v, 14.—xx, 10. John, viii, 5.—xxvi, 12. 2 Cor. vi, 16.

NUMBERS is so called, because it begins with an accouut of the *numberings* of the people. It shows us how literally the promise was fulfilled to Abraham, that "his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude." It comprehends a period of about 38 years.—It describes the journeys of Israel—their murmurings and punishment—Balaam and Balak—Jehovah guides his people in the right way—Israel was afflicted in the wilderness, yet what miracles were wrought for Israel; but in the midst of these they quarrel with God, and do not escape unpunished.—These things, says Paul, happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition. The visible church of God on earth is in all ages a mixed church. The brazen serpent, hung upon the pole, was a striking type of Jesus Christ; and the recovery of the Israelites of the recovery of the perishing soul through faith in him.—See John iii, 14, 15.

References in Numbers.

viii, 16. Luke ii, 23.—ix, 18. 1 Cor. i, 10.—xi, 4. 1 Cor. x, 6.—xii, 7. Heb. iii, 2.—xiv, 27. 1 Cor. x, 10; Heb. iii, 17.—xvi, 1. Jude xi.—xix, 3. Heb. xiii, 11.—xx, 8. 1 Cor. x, 4.—xxi, 5. 1 Cor. x. 9.—xxi, 9. John iii, 14.—xxii, 23. 2 Pet. ii, 16.—xxii, 39. 2 Pet. ii, 15; Jude xi.—xxiv, 14. Rev. ii, 14.—xxv, 9. 1 Cor. x. 8.—xxvi, 65. 1 Cor. x, 5.—xxviii 9. Matt. 12, 5.

DEUTERONOMY signifies *the law repeated.* It briefly touches on many former circumstances, strongly urges the people to obedience, describes the glory of Canaan, and contains an account of the death of Moses. In chap. xviii, v, 18, there is a very plain prophecy of Christ, see Acts iii, 22. This instructive book is full of practical directions, most of which are as applicable to us, as they were to Israel, and it is worthy of our most diligent perusal.

References in Deuteronomy.

vi, 13. Matt. iv, 10.—vi, 16. Matt. iv, 7.—viii, 3. Matt. iv, 4.—x, 17. Acts x, 34; Rom. xii, 11; Col. iii, 25.—x, 17. Ephes. vi, 9.—xviii, 1. 1 Cor. ix, 13.—xviii, 6. Heb. x, 28.—xviii, 18. John i, 45; Acts iii, 22; Acts vii, 37.—xxiv, 1. Matt. v, 31; Matt. xix, 7; Mark x, 4.—xxv. 4. 1 Cor. ix, 9.—xxvii, 26. Gal. iii. 10.—xxx, 12—14. Rom. x, 6—9.

The next twelve books, from Joshua to Job, are called *historical* books.

JOSHUA contains the history from the death of Moses to the deaths of Joshua and Eleazer, a space of about 30 years: it contains an account of the conquest and division of the land of Canaan, the happiness of the people of God, the mercies bestowed on them, and the tremendous judgments inflicted on his enemies. How exactly God fulfilled his promise to Abraham, of giving Canaan for a possession to his seed. Joshua was a type of Christ conducting his people through every difficulty to the heavenly Canaan.

Though num'rous hosts of mighty foes—
Though earth and hell their way oppose,
He safely leads their souls along;
His loving-kindness, O how strong.

References in Joshua.

i, 5. Heb. xiii, 5.—ii, 1. Heb. xi, 31.—ii, 1. James ii, 25.—vii, 30. Heb. xi, 30, 31.—iii, 14. Acts vii, 45.—xiv, 1, 2. Acts xiii, 19.

JUDGES contains the history of about 309 years, being a short account of the affairs of Israel, from the death of Joshua to that of Samson: it consists of two parts—the first, ending at the 16th chapter, contains the regular history; and the remaining five chapters, contain an account of some remarkable events which happened during that time. Observe the sinfulness of man, in the conduct of Israel, and how punishment follows sin. See again the goodness of God in forgiving them. All their temporal deliverers may point out to us that great Deliverer, who is the captain of our salvation.

References in Judges.

ii, 16. Acts xiii, 20.—Generally Heb. xi, 32, 4.

RUTH is the history of a private family, recorded to show the genealogy of Christ, through David, to the line of Judah; the merciful providence of God towards the afflicted; and the reward of obedience. Let us follow Christ, as Ruth followed Naomi. Ch. i, 16, 17.

References in Ruth.

iv, 18. Matt. i, 4 and Luke iii, 31, 33.

I. SAMUEL includes the history of 80 years: it contains an account of the birth of Samuel, the destruction of Eli's house, the Israelites desiring a king, and the appointment of Saul—his persecutions of David, who overcame Goliah; and the death of Saul and his sons. How great the difference true religion makes. Compare Saul and David, Eli's sons and Samuel.—The history of Eli, Samuel, and David, shows us that we must, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom of heaven; but observe in Eli's sons, in Saul, and in Nabal, that sin is the road to disgrace, misery, and death. Above all, direct your eyes to Christ, of whom

David was an eminent type; under the oppositions he met with in his way to the throne, his afflictions, deliverances, and final triumph, you may see much of Christ.

References in I. Samuel.

xxi, 6. Matt. xii, 3, 4; Mark ii, 25; Luke vi, 4.—xvi, 12 Acts v, 46: Acts vii, 4.—Generally Acts xiii, 21—23.

II. Samuel contains the history of the reign of David for about 40 years. His accession to the throne, his victories, his endeavours to promote religion, his grievous sins and consequent troubles, and his deep repentance, are fully described. Mark, in his fall, the strength and prevalence of human corruption, and in his repentance and recovery, the extent and efficacy of divine grace. The reign of David prefigures the reign of Christ.—Luke i, 32, 33.

Reference in II. Samuel.

xii, 24. Matt. i. 6.

I. Kings contains the history of 126 years; begins with Solomon's appointment to the throne, describes David's death, the reign of Solomon, the building of the temple, Solomon's sin—his death, the division of the twelve tribes into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, (from this time the people of the ten tribes are called *Israel*, and those of the kingdom of Judah are called *Jews*,) the account of Elijah the prophet, and of several kings. The reign of Solomon is a figure of the peaceful reign of the Saviour. The temple itself, where alone sacrifice was offered, and of which so much is afterwards said, is often used by the sacred writers as an image of the beauty and perfection of the church of God. When Israel became idolaters they never prospered.

References in I. Kings.

ii, 10. Acts ii, 29; Acts xiii. 36.—x, 1. Matt. xii, 42; Luke xi, 31.—xvii, 1. Luke iv, 25.—xviii, 42. James 5. 17.

II. Kings contains the history of 344 years. The history of Israel and Judah is here carried on together; Elijah is taken up to heaven, and Elisha succeeds him; the reigns of many kings in Israel and Judah are described; the ten tribes of Israel are carried captives to Assyria, and in about 160 years afterwards Judah is carried captive to Babylon. See the evil and effects of sin. In Elijah, and afterwards in Elisha, we see how much good one resolute man of God may effect. The seed of David is continued on the throne. See the faithfulness of God.

References in II. Kings.

iv, 29. Luke x, 4.—v, 14. Luke iv, 27.

I. and II. Chronicles give a general view of the whole history, from the creation, to the return from the captivity in Babylon, a period of about 3468 years. The history is confined to the kings of Judah. The genealogies, or lists of ancestors, are of importance, to show that Christ came from Abraham. What a pattern of zeal and piety is David. Observe how pious kings, when the country was plagued for its sin, applied to God, and were heard. Imitate their example in your distress. See, in Jehosaphat, how dangerous it is for those who fear God to enter into connection with the wicked. See in him the value of faith and prayer.

References in I. Chronicles.

xxiii, 13. Heb. v, 4.—xxiv, 10. Luke i, 5.

The Reigns of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

Ch. in Chron. 2d Bk.	*Kings of Judah.*	*Yrs. bef. Chst*	*Years of Reign*	*Kings of Israel.*	*Yrs bef. C't.*	*Years of Reign.*	*Prophets and Events.*	*Chap. in Kings.*
1—9	Solomon.	1011	4—36				Temple built	1st Ks.
10—12	Rehobo.	957	17	Jereobo.	975	22		2—11
13	Abijah	958	3					12—15
14—16	Asa	955	41	Nadab.	953	1		15
				Baasha	952	23		15
				Elah	929	1		16
				Zimri	928	7 days		16
				Omri	928	yrs 11		16
				Ahab	917	20	Elijah	16—22
17—20	Jehosa-			Ahaziah	897	1		2d K. 1
	phat	914	25					
21	Jehoram	889	4	Jehoram	896	11	Elisha	3—9
22	Ahaziah	885	1					
23	Athaliah	881	6	Jehu	884	28		10—12
24	Joash	878	40	Jehoahaz	856	17	Jonah	13
25	Amaziah	839	29	Jehoash	839	14		13
				Jerebo. 2	825	41	Joel	15
26	Azariah	810	52	Interreg.	784	11	Amos	
	orUzzi.			Zachari.	773	6 mths	Hosea	15
				Shallum	772	1 mth.		15
				Mena-				
				hem		10 yrs.		15
				Pekaiah	762	2	Isaiah	15
				Pekah	760	20	Micah	15
27	Jotham	758	16		740		1st. Captivity of Israel	
28	Ahaz	742	16	Interreg.	738	8		
				Hoshea	730	9		15
29—32	Hezeki.	726	29				2d Captivity	
33	Manas.	698	55		721		Nahum	
							3d Captivity	
33	Amon	643	2		677		Jer. Hab.	
34—35	Josiah	641	31				and Zepha.	
							1st Cap. of	16to25
36	Jehoa-						Judah	
	haz	610	3mth.				Daniel	
36	Jehoia-							
	kim	599	11 do.					
36	Jehoia-						2d Cap. of Judah	
	chin	599	3 do.				Ezekiel and	
36	Zediki.	599	11 yr.				Jeremiah	
		588	The Temple destroyed and Judah and Israel carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchednezzar.					

Ezra, contains an account of the return of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, after the seventy years captivity, under Zerubbabel, and afterwards under Ezra, and gives the history of about eighty years; Zerubbabel erects the new temple and Ezra restores the service of God. The benefit of affliction may be seen in the conduct of the Jews who seek God in their captivity. Their faith and patience are tried in the building of the temple, but persevering, they finally prevail;—an encouraging example to excite us to be zealous in the cause of God, however low it may be depressed.

Nehemiah, is a continuation of the history for about twelve years. Under great concern for the afflictions of Jerusalem, Nehemiah leaves all the comforts he enjoyed in the court of Artaxerxes, stirs up the Jews to build the walls of Jerusalem, and reforms many abuses. How deeply affected the people were on hearing the law read! May you hear or read your Bible with a similar spirit. It is evident how profitable affliction had been to them.—Observe the spirit of prayer in Nehemiah throughout the book: see in him also a pattern of the love of the Saviour to his Church.

Esther, is an account of a remarkable deliverance of the Jews. It is supposed that Ahasuerus is the same person with Artaxerxes, or with Darius, mentioned in Ezra. God never fails to help his Church in distress.—Observe the various links in the chain by which the deliverance is effected. Imitate Esther's confidence in God in trying circumstances. In Haman, David's expression is verified, "I myself have seen the wicked in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree; I passed by, and he was not."

The five following books are more simply and entirely religious, and declare to us the will of God in a more doctrinal way; they are called *poetical* books, being chiefly written in metre or verse in the original; "Job is doctrinal, the Psalms devotional, the Proverbs practical, Ecclesiastes penitential, and Canticles experimental." We should read less of these at one time, and meditate more upon what we read.

Job is supposed to have lived before Moses. The book contains an account of Job's piety—his prosperity—his trials and afflictions—his debates with his friends—his self-justification—God's address to Job—his self-condemnation and restoration to greater prosperity than before. We see in Job an eminent type of the suffering and glorified Saviour, and a pattern of the believer's passing through much tribulation. Job's patience, and his faith, in a divine living Redeemer (Job xix,) are exemplary. How unprofitable are religious debates, when conducted in a spirit of contention and self-justification. Rom. i, 29.

References in Job.

i, 21. 1 Tim. vi, 7.—ii, 10. James v, 11. —v, 13. 1 Cor. iii, 19.—v, 17. Heb. xii, 5. —xxxiv, 19. Acts x, 34.

Psalms.* This book was written at

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* The following table of Psalms may be found useful in directing you to such as suite your state of mind.

Prayers.

For pardon of sin—6, 25, 38, 51, 130. Penitential—6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

When prevented attending public worship—42, 43, 63, 84.

When dejected under afflictions—13, 22, 69, 77, 88, 143.

Asking help of God—7, 17, 26, 35.

Expressing trust in God in afflictions—3, 16, 27, 31, 54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 71, 86.

Under affliction or persecution—44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, 94, 102, 123, 137.

In trouble—4, 5, 11, 28, 41, 55, 59, 64, 79, 109, 120, 140, 141, 142.

Intercession—20, 67, 122, 132, 144.

Thanksgivings for Mercies.

To particular persons—9, 18, 22, 30, 34, 40, 75, 103, 108, 116, 118, 138, 144.

To the Israelites—46, 48, 65, 66, 68, 76, 81, 85, 98, 105, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 149.

Psalms of praise and adoration, displaying God's attributes.

His goodness and mercy and care of good men—23, 34, 36, 91, 100, 103, 107, 117, 121, 145, 146.

His power, majesty, glory, and other attributes 8, 19, 24, 29, 33, 47, 50, 65, 66, 76, 77, 93, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 111, 113, 114, 115, 134, 139, 147, 148, 150.

various times, by different persons; chiefly, however, by David. It contains the sum of the Bible, adapted to the purposes of devotion. While it has a literal sense generally applying to David, its main design is to set forth the Saviour, and to unveil the heart of a believer. David himself is the great type of Christ; the Jewish nation prefigured the professing people of God; their Canaan, our heaven; their redemption from Egypt, our redemption from sin; as their guilt was atoned for through sacrifices, so ours by the one great sacrifice of Christ; their temporal saviours, kings, priests, and prophets show the one great Saviour Jesus Christ; their enemies, the enemies of the Church of God. Nor is this a bare accommodation of the words, but one great intention of the Spirit of God, as is evident from the direct application of many of the Psalms in this way in the New Testament. Study them first, indeed, in the literal sense as it respects David, and then you will be better able to consider and improve them, in the higher and spiritual sense, where they relate to Christ and his Church. The prayers in the Psalms, poured out unto God in a variety of circumstances, whilst they express the mind of those who wrote them under the Jewish dispensation, are thus well suited to express our feelings under the Christian dispensation. You cannot have better materials for prayer than the Psalms afford. Do you desire to confess your sins? take 51st Psalm: to praise God? take the 103d: to pray for grace and strength to be taught and to keep God's law? take the 119th: to pray for the Heathen? take the 67th: to pray for the church? take the 122d. The more we know of practical experimental religion, the more we shall value and read this book.

Instructive Psalms.

The characters of good and bad men, their happiness and misery—1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 50, 52, 53, 58, 73, 75, 84, 91, 92, 94, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127, 128, 133.

The excellence of God's law—19, 119.

Vanity of human life—39, 49, 90.

Advice to magistrates—82, 101.

Humility—131.

Prophetical Psalms—2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 72, 87, 110, 118.

Historical Psalms—78, 105, 106.

References in the Psalms.

ii, 1. Acts iv, 25, 26.—ii, 7. Acts xiii, 13; Heb. i, 5, and v, 5.—viii, 4. Heb. ii, 6.—xvi, 10. Acts xiii, 35.—xviii, 49. Rom. xv, 9.—xix, 4. Rom. x, 18.—xxii, Matt. xxvii; Mark xv.—xxxi, 5. Luke xxiii, 46.—xl, 6. Heb. x, 5.—xli, 9. John xiii, 18.—xliv, 22. Rom. viii, 36.—xlv, 6. Heb. i, 8.—lxviii, 18. Ephes. iv, 7, 8.—lxix, 22, 23. Rom. xi, 9, 10.—lxix, 25. Acts i, 20.—lxxviii, 2. Matt. xiii, 34.—xci, 11. Matt. iv, 6, 7.—xcv. Heb. iii, and iv.—cix, 8. Acts i, 20.—cx, 1. Matt. xxii, 44; Luke xx, 42.—cxvii, 1. Rom. xv, 11.—cxviii, 22. Matt. xxi, 42; Acts iv, 11; Ephes. ii, 20; 1 Pet. ii, 4, 7.—cxxxii, 5. Acts ii, 30; Acts vii, 46.

The Proverbs, written chiefly by Solomon, are useful practical lessons for every day's conduct, in short sentences, that can be easily remembered. Christ is represented under the name of Wisdom. This book teaches how to walk daily with God. A pious man said, whenever he was in a difficulty respecting the path of duty, his practice was, to read over again this book, and it generally suggested something that was useful, in guiding him aright through the intricacies of life.

References in Proverbs.

iii, 11, 12. Heb. xii, 5, 6.—iii, 24. James iv, 6; 1 Pet. v. 5.—x, 12. James v, 20.—xi, 31. 1 Pet. iv, 17, 18.—xvii, 27. James i, 19.—xx, 9. 1 John i, 8.—xxiv, 23. James ii, 1.—xxv, 6, 7. Luke xiv, 8, 10.—xxv, 21, 22. Rom. xii, 20.—xxvii, 1. James iv, 13.

Ecclesiastes, supposed to have been written by Solomon at the close of his life, is the book of his repentance. It shows us that no created good can satisfy the soul, and that happiness is to be found in God alone. No one ever had such advantages as Solomon for proving these truths, and he here, as a penitent, wise, and faithful preacher, gives us the conclusions drawn from his own experience.

Reference.—vii, 20. Rom. iii, 23.

The Song of Solomon. This book is commonly understood to represent the

mutual love of Christ and the Church, under the well-known and endearing figure of a bridegroom and bride. The bridegroom is considered as pointing out Christ, his friends, the angels and ministers; the bride, the Church of Christ, and her companions, all who seek to belong to the Church. We have a lively representation of the spiritual state of Christ's Church in this world, and of its various experiences. It is impossible that a natural or unconverted man should understand this book. None but those who can truly say of Christ, this is my beloved, and this is my friend, are qualified to read it with advantage.

Similar figures are used in Matt. ix, 15, xxii, 2. xxv, 1—11. John iii, 29. 2 Cor. xi, 2. Ephes. v, 23, 27. Rev. xix, 7, 9. xxi, 2, 9. xxii, 17.

References in the song of Solomon.

i, 4. John vi, 44.—iv, 7. Ephes. v, 27.—v, 2. Rev. iii, 20.—vii, 1. Isa. lii, 7.—vii, 1. Ephes. vi, 15.—viii, 11. Isa. v, 1—7.—viii, 11. Matt. xxi, 33. 43.—viii, 14. Rev. xxii, 20.

The sixteen following books are *prophetical*, foretelling things to come to pass after the books were written. The first four are called the greater, and the other twelve the lesser prophets. The prophecies relate to Jesus Christ and the Christian Church, the Jewish nation in particular, and the several other nations and empires of the world, as they were in various ways connected with the Church of God. The language of the prophets is full of figures, chiefly borrowed from nature. The *sun*, *moon*, and *stars* are often used to represent kings queens, and men in authority; *mountains* and *hills*, kingdoms and cities; *marriage*, the covenant of God; *adultery*, departure from God to idols. Difficulties in understanding the prophecies are either owing to our ignorance of history and scripture, or because the prophecies are yet unfulfilled.

Isaiah prophesied before the captivity, from Uzziah to Hezekiah, for about 60 years. He is so full in his descriptions of the Saviour, that he has been called the fifth evangelist: he describes minutely his birth, ch. vii, 14.—his sufferings and death, ch. liii.—his kingdom and glory, ch. lii, liv.—between 7 and 800 years before he came into the world. He foretells the ruin of many great cities and countries, and many of his predictions respecting these, have received a full accomplishment.

References in Isaiah.

i, 9. Rom. ix, 29.—vi, 9, &c. John xii, 40, &c.—vii, 14. Luke i, 34.—viii, 14. Luke ii, 34.—viii, 18. Heb. ii, 13.—ix, 1, 2. Matt. iv, 16.—ix, 7. Luke i, 32, 33.—xi, 10. Rom. xv, 12.—xiii, 10. Matt. xxiv, 29; Mark xiii, 24.—xxi, 9. Rev. xviii, 2.—xxii, 22. Rev. iii, 7.—xxv, 8. 1 Cor. xv, 54.—xxviii, 11. 1 Cor. xiv, 21.—xxviii, 16. Rom. ix, 33.—xxix, 13. Matt. xv, 8.—xxxv, 5, 6. Matt. xi, 45.—xl, 3. Matt. iii, 3.—xl, 6. 1 Pet. i. 24.—xlii, 1, &c. Matt. xii, 18, &c.—xlv, 9. Rom. ix, 20.—xlv, 23. Rom. xiv. 11.—xlix, 6. Acts xiii, 47.—liii. Matt. xxvi, 27.—liv, 1. Gal. iv, 27.—liv, 13. John vi, 45.—lviii, 7. Matt. xxv, 35.—lix, 20. Rom. 11, 26.—lxi, 1. Luke iv, 18.—lxiii, 1, 2. Rev. xix, 13.—lxv, 1. Rom. x, 20.—lxvi, 24. Mark 9, 44.

Jeremiah prophesied at Jerusalem, near the time of the captivity. He began in the 13th year of Josiah, and continued about 43 years. He foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, the captivity of the people, ch. 21, &c. and yet the ultimate deliverance of the Church of God, and the ruin of the enemies of Judah. We see in the case of Jeremiah, what treatment the people of God meet with, when reproving the ungodly—we have an example of persevering fidelity in delivering God's message, however unwelcome

References in Jeremiah.

ii, 21. Matt. xxi, 33; Mark xii, 1; Luke xx, 9.—vi, 16. Matt. xi, 29.—ix, 23, 24. 1 Cor. i, 29, 31.—xviii, 6. Rom. ix, 20.—xxxi, 31, &c. Heb. viii; 8, &c. Heb. x, 16, 17. xxxi, 15. Matt. 2, 17, 18.

The Lamentations are a pathetic mourning over the miseries of Judah. Jeremiah met with nothing but ill usage

from Judah, yet how he mourns over their afflictions. He returns them good for evil. Let us be equally well affected, to the welfare of Sion. The 3d chapter will be particularly useful to any one in great trouble.

Reference.—iii, 45. 1 Cor. iv. 13.

Ezekiel wrote his prophecies at Babylon. He began in the 5th year of Jehoakim's captivity, and continued 19 years. The exact agreement of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, written at so great a distance as Babylon from Judea, must have struck the Jews. He comforts the people of God with promises of the future glory of the church, under the figure of a new temple. How awakening the calls of the 18th—how inviting the promises of the 36th chapter. May we be earnest in prayer, that we may obey the calls to repentance, and partake of the promised blessings.

References in Ezekiel.

i, 10. Rev. iv, 7.—ix, 4 Rev. vii, 1, 3.—ix, 6. 1 Pet. iv, 17.—xii, 22. 2 Pet. iii, 4. xviii, 7. Matt. xxv, 35.—xxxviii, 1. Rev. xx, 1.

Daniel prophesied under the captivity. The six first chapters are historical and the six last prophetical. He flourished from the third year of Jehoakim, king of Judah, to the third of Cyrus. The prophecies of Daniel relate to four great empires of the earth, whose rise and fall he mentions, ch. 2, and 7: and to the period of the Messiah's appearance on earth, which he more exactly foretels than any other prophet. Hence Christ was generally expected at that time, and the Jews have here an insurmountable difficulty. They cannot account for his not coming; whilst we have the fullest evidence that he actually did come at the precise time foretold. Daniel shows that Christ came to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and then tells us, that "Messiah shall be cut off but not for himself, ch. ix, 24—27. He also shows us the different conditions of the just and unjust at their resurrection, ch. xii, 2, 3. The 9th chapter contains a striking confession of national sins. Pray it over when you pray for your country.

References in Daniel.

vii, 10. Rev. 5, 11.—ix, 27. Matt. xxiv, 15.—xii, 7. Rev. x, 5.

Hosea prophesied before the captivity for about 80 years, in the days of Jeroboam, the 2d king of Israel, and of Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz, kings of Judah. His prophecies chiefly relate to the ten tribes. They were then in prosperity, but their sins were preparing the way for their ruin. He strongly exhorts them to faith and repentance; convicts them of idolatry under the figures of adultery and whoredom; and denounces grievous threatenings against them. The 6th and 14th chapters contain earnest invitations to all sinners to return to God, and encouraging promises to those who do return. Use them in this view for yourself.*

References in Hosea.

i, 10, 11. Rom. ix, 25, 26.—ii, 23. 1 Pet. ii, 10.—vi, 6. Matt. ix, 13.—x, 8. Luke xxii, 30.—x, 8. Rev. vi, 16.—xi, 1. Matt. ii, 15.—xiii, 14. 1 Cor. xv, 54, &c.

Joel prophesied before the captivity, in the days of Uzziah. He threatens the desolation of the land, and gives a minute description of a plague of locusts, figurative of an invading army. He calls to repentance and prayer, to which great blessings are promised, particularlarly an abundant outpouring of the spirit of God.

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* Cecil says, "In reading the scriptures we are apt to think God further removed from us than from the persons to whom he spake therein. The knowledge of God will rectify this error—as if God *could* be farther from us than from them. In reading the Old Testament especially, we are apt to think that the things spoken there, in the prophet Hosea for instance, have little relation to us. The knowledge taught by experience will rectify this error,—as if religion were not always the same sort of transaction between God and the soul."

References in Joel.

iii, 15. Matt. xxiv, 29; Mark xiii, 24.—ii, 28, 32. Acts ii, 16, 21.—ii, 32. Rom. x, 13, 16.

Amos prophesied after Joel, in the days of Uzziah. He dwells on the many sins of Israel, calls them to repent, foretells the captivity; the setting up of Christ's kingdom; and the restoration of Israel. How long God bears with Israel, how often he warns them, and yet, when they continue impenitent, how surely he executes his threatenings. Let *us* take heed.

References in Amos.

v, 26, 27. Acts vii, 42, 43.—ix, 11, 12. Acts xv, 15, 16.

Obadiah prophesied probably about the time of Jeremiah—He foretells the ruin of the Edomites, and the final triumph of Christ's kingdom. "Christ must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet." Let *us* submit to him now.

Reference.—21. Rev. xi, 15.

Jonah lived in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel. Commissioned to go to Nineveh to proclaim its ruin; instead of going there he flees, through fear, to Tarsus—is cast into the sea and swallowed by a fish—prays and is delivered. Ninevah repents upon his preaching, at which Jonah grieves. See the danger of disregarding God's command—the power of prayer in distress—the selfishness, pride, and perverseness of man's heart. Jonah's deliverance is a well known type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Use Jonah's prayer, chap. 2, in your trouble.—See Matt. xii, 39, 41. and xvi. 4. Luke xi, 30, 32.

Micah prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He assisted Isaiah—he foretells the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem—reproves the sin of all ranks—speaks of the inefficacy of sacrifices and ordinances without a spiritual mind and a holy life—mentions Christ's coming, and the place of his birth, chap. v, 2. See again the evil of sin—the danger of self-righteousness, and the blessings purchased by Christ.

References in Micah.

ii, 10. Heb. xiii. 13, 14.—iv, 7. Luke i, 33.—v, 2. Matt. ii, 5, 6; John vii, 42.—vii. 6. Matt. x, 35, 36.

Nahum prophesied in the days of Hezekiah and Manasses. He foretells, in language particularly simple and sublime, the fall of Ninevah, which, abusing God's long suffering, is finally consigned to destruction. Not even the ruins of this great city are known. How dangerous it is to trifle with the forbearance of the Almighty. His enemies are destroyed—his church stands forever.

Reference.—i, 15. Rom. x, 15.

Habakkuk prophesied in the days of Manasses. He describes the sins of the Jews and Chaldeans, and the mercy of God to his people. He points out the duty of living by faith, chap. ii, 1—4, and concludes with showing the efficacy of a believer's dependence upon God as a Saviour, to sweeten the worst afflictions. May we, like him, be enabled to rejoice, under trials, in the God of our salvation.

References in Habakkuk.

i, 5. Acts xiii, 40, 41.—ii, 3, 4. Rom. i, 17.

Zepheniah prophesied in the days of Josiah, king of Judah. He foretells the Chaldean invasion—the ruin of the enemies of the Jews, and the future prosperity of God's church. This church will triumph at last. Happy are they who are members of it.

Haggai prophesied after the return of the Jews from captivity. To encourage them to rebuild the temple, he foretells

Christ's coming to it. Chap. ii, 7—9. This temple is a figure of that church in which the Saviour ever dwells, and which shall never be destroyed.

References in Haggai.

ii, 6, 7. Heb. xii, 26, 27.—ii, 9. John i, 14.

Zechariah prophesied shortly after Haggai. He delivers many remarkable predictions respecting Christ and his gospel. We may learn also from this book the duty of seeking the welfare of the spiritual temple, the church of Christ. He gives many animating descriptions of the blessings of the gospel; see the promises of a fountain for sin and uncleanness, chap. xiii, the spirit of grace and supplication, faith in a pierced Saviour, and deep repentance, chap. xii.

References in Zechariah.

ix, 9. Matt. xxi, 4, 5; John xii, 14, 16.—xi, 12, 13. Matt. xxvii, 7, 10.—xii, 10. John xix, 34, 37.—xii, 10. Rev. i, 7.—xiii, 7. Matt. xxvi, 3.—xiii, 7. Mark xiv. 27.

Malachi prophesied after Zechariah. He foretells the ministry of John the Baptist, and the speedy coming of the Messiah. Chap. iii, 1. The nearer this approaches, the more clearly the light shines. What advantages we have in the full blaze of gospel light. O may we duly improve them, lest they rise up in judgment against us.

References in Malachi.

iii, 1. Matt. xi, 10; Mark i, 2.—iii, 1. Luke vii, 27.—iv, 5, 6. Matt. xvii, 10, 12. iv, 5, 6. Mark ix, 11, 12; Luke i, 16, 17.

A living prelate gives us the following clear and concise account of the history of the Jews, from the time of their captivity to the time of Christ; forming a connexion between the old and new testament history.

"The Jews had many revolutions of peace and war, and some changes in the mode of their government, from the time of their return from the Babylonian captivity, to their complete subjection to the Romans; but their sacerdotal (or priestly) government, as it is sometimes called, continued with but little interruption through this whole space of about 600 years. Having returned into their own country under the sanction and authority of Cyrus, they acknowledged the sovereignty of the kings of Persia, till that empire was overturned by Alexander the Great (according to Dean Prideaux, B. C. 330.) They then became subject to his successors, first in Egypt, afterwards in Syria, till having been deprived of their civil and religious liberties for three years and a half, by Antiochus Epiphanes, (B. C. 168,) they were restored both to the exercise of their religion and to their ancient independence, by the piety and bravery of Mattathias and his descendants, (B. C. 165.) Under these Macabean princes they became an entirely free state, supported by good troops, strong garrisons, and alliances, not only with neighboring powers, but with remote kingdoms, even Rome itself. This glory of the Jews was but of short duration: for, though the decline of the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria prevented their interference in the affairs of other states, yet the entire ruin of these two kingdoms, by the great accession of power which it brought to the Romans, paved the way for the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. Pompey compelled the Jews to submit to the arms of Rome, (B. C. 63;) and from that time their country was tributary to the Romans, although it was still governed by Maccabean princes. The last of that family was conquered and deposed by Herod the Great, an Idumean by birth, but of the Jewish religion, (B. C. 37,) who had been appointed king of the Jews by the Romans, and enjoyed a long reign over the whole of Palestine, in the course of which he greatly diminished the civil power of the high priests. He was succeeded in the government of the greater part of Palestine by his son Archelaus, (B. C. 3,) whose misconduct caused Augustus to banish him, and to reduce his dominion into the form of a Roman province, (A. C. 8.) And thus it appears, that with the exception of the

short predicted period of Antiochus Epiphanes, the kingdom of Judah, for some time independent, but generally tributary, continued to enjoy its own religion and the form of its civil government till after the birth of the Messiah."

In general the Jews were never so faithful to God, as immediately after their return from captivity. We never hear of idolatry being set up again by them. Plenty was soon seen; and there was profound peace and tranquility for nearly 300 years, from Nehemiah to the Maccabees. Hence the glowing description of this time in the prophets; though it will receive its full accomplishment only in Messiah's reign.

The Gospels. The word gospel signifies glad tidings—good news; and can there be better news to *sinful* man, than to be informed that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:" or to *lost* man, than to learn that he came "to seek and to save that which was lost." Here we see how all that was foretold of the Messiah was exactly accomplished. There are four histories of Christ, written at different periods and by different persons, yet all agreeing together. The great end of all is, to shew us Jesus Christ, the salvation he has procured for us, and the example he has left us. He is perfect God and perfect man; "the same yesterday, to day, and forever." All the compassion he manifested, and all the relief he afforded to the bodies of men, is but a shadow of what he is ever ready to do for our souls. All the instructions that he gave on earth, show how willing he is now to guide his people into the way of truth. All the miracles show his power to help us in the worst distress.—By faith go to this Saviour; he will give you his spirit, and you will be blessed in him, both in time and through eternity. He has also left us "an example, that we should follow his steps." We should endeavor to be like-minded with Christ.*

* This is a very important point to be attended to in reading the gospels, and, to assist you in this respect, I subjoin some particulars in him which we should imitate.

1. His early piety, Luke ii, 46, 47.
2. His obedience to his earthly parents, Luke ii. 51.
3. His unwearied diligence in doing good, Acts x, 38.
4. His humility and lowliness of mind, Matt. xi, 29. His self-denial, Phil. ii, 7, 8. His contentment in a mean condition in this world, Luke ix, 5—8. Phil. iv. 11. He submitted to be a carpenter, Mark vi. 3.
5. His frequent and long-continued private prayer, Mark i, 35. Luke vi, 12. Matt. xiv, 23. Luke ix, 18. His faith in prayer, John xi, 42.
6. His frequent praise and thanksgiving, Matt. xi, 25. John xi, 41.
7. His compassion towards the miserable and distressed, Matt. xx, 34.
8. His edifying and useful discourse, Luke xiv. 7. xxiv, 13.
9. His kind and condescending behavior, Matt. xi, 19. Luke v. 29.
10. His patience under sufferings and reproaches, 1 Pet. ii. 23. His readiness to forgive injuries, Luke xxiii, 34—Luke iv, 54, 56.
11. His laying to heart the sins, as well as the sufferings of others, Mark iii, 5.
12. His zeal for the public worship of God, John ii. 17. Luke iv, 16.
13. His cheerful submission to his Heavenly Father's will, Matt. xxvi, 39.
14. His love and practice of universal holiness, John iv, 34.
15. His subjection to government, Matt. xxii, 21.—Matt. xvii, 27.
16. His victory over temptation, Matt. iv, 1, 10.

The gospel also makes known the great work of the Holy Spirit, who creates our hearts anew, and puts us in possession of the promised blessings. The gospel dispensation is peculiarly the ministration of the spirit.

Matthew was a publican, which means a collector of taxes. Christ called him to be one of his apostles, and he remained constantly with him. It was probably about eight years after Christ's death that Matthew wrote his gospel. He continually refers to the old testament. He, having accompanied Christ in his journeyings and miracles, is considered as having written in exact order of time.

Mark's gospel is supposed to have been written under the inspection of the apostle Peter, at the request of the Christians at Rome. He records many of the same facts as Matthew, with some additional occurrences. Mark was a Jew

living in Judea, and is considered as having written nearly in the order of time. He is called Marcus, 1 Pet. v, 13.

Luke was a physician, and is supposed to have written his gospel while travelling with St. Paul. His history is more full than the others. Luke having lived in Antioch, and not having himself seen the events he describes, is supposed to have little regard to the order of time in his account of Christ's ministry. It is evident that he was almost a constant companion of St. Paul: Acts xvi, 10. xxviii, 1, 2. xxvii, 7—10. Col. iv, 14. 2 Tim. iv, 11. Philem. 24.

John was the beloved disciple of Christ, and wrote his gospel last of all, to add many of our Lord's discourses not included in the other gospels, and to confute several heresies then springing up respecting the person of Christ, whom he proves in the plainest manner, to be both God and man. John having been one of the Apostles, writes in the order of time, but with a view however of recording some very remarkable particulars.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke, and contains the history of the Church for about 30 years after Christ's death. We see the evident blessing of God upon the gospel in its progress through the world, although superstition and idolatry were every where established, and Christianity was generally opposed and persecuted. A thorough knowledge of this book will throw much light upon the following epistles. We here see the beginning of a new day in the Church of God—that Church which consists of a people distinct from the world—distinct from nominal or professing Christians—a people converted by the work of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts. These have ever felt and owned themselves lost and undone sinners, and have found themselves comforted and refreshed with divine peace, through faith, in the righteousness and salvation of Christ. They have obtained a new heart and a new spirit, have enjoyed communion with the Saviour, and through a spiritual union with him, have received strength to overcome sin. They have lived *in him* spiritually—have followed his example—had their conversation in heaven, and though despised and ill-treated by the world, yet they have returned good for evil, blessings for curses, prayers for persecutions, and kindness for injuries.—These are the real friends of mankind, the people of God, the Church of Christ.*

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*It is generally agreed that the first ages of the Church of Christ were the purest, and that the character and conduct of the primitive Christians form a model for our lives. The following outline of some particulars recorded of them, may help to show us what is the real religion of the gospel.

1. *Dispositions towards God and Christ.* Deep impressions of their sinfulness and danger at the time of their conversion, Acts ii, 37; ix, 6; xvi, 29, 30; and a complete and entire change afterwards, 1 Cor. vi, 9, 11. Ephes. ii, 5, 6. Faith in Christ, Col. i, 3. 1 Thess. i, 3. 2 Thess. i, 3. Fear of God, Acts ix, 31. Love of God, Rom. v, 5. Hope in God, 1 Thess. i, 3. Peace with God, Rom. v, 1. Joy in God, Rom. v, 11. Thankfulness to God, Acts ii, 47. Ephes. v, 19.

2. *Attention to the ordinances of God and the means of Grace.* Joy and reverence in receiving the gospel, Acts iii, 41, 46, 47; viii, 8. 1 Thess. ii, 13. Baptism, Acts ii, 41. xviii, 8. Diligent study of the scriptures, Acts xvi, 11. Frequent receiving the Lord's Supper, Acts ii, 46. 1 Cor. xi, 26. Private devotion, Acts x, 9; ii, 42. Social Prayer, Acts xvi, 25. Public worship, Acts iii, 1; xx, 7. Early in the morning, Acts xii, 12; and late at night, Acts xx, 7. Prayers for their enemies, Acts vii, 60.

3. *Tempers and conduct towards others.* Esteem of their ministers, Gal. iv, 14. Acts xx, 38. Prayers for them, Acts xii, 5. Care of them, Phil. 12, 25; iv, 10—18; and the love of the ministers of their people, 2 Cor. vi, 11. Love to all the brethren, 1 Thess. iv, 9, 10. Ephes. i, 15. Heb. xiii, 1. 1 Pet. i, 22; and charity in relieving the necessities of those in want, Acts xi, 29. Rom. xv, 26. 1 Cor. xvi, 1. 2 Cor. viii, 2, 3. Philem. 7. 3 John 6. Acts ii, 45. 2 Thess. i, 3. Great unanimity and union, Acts iv, 32. Diligence in spreading religion, Acts viii, 34. Liberality and bounty, Acts iv, 34; ii, 45. Separation from the wicked, 1 Cor. v, 11. 2 Thess. iii, 6—14.

4. *Conduct as it respected themselves.* Sober deportment, 1 Pet. iv, 4. Deep humility and thorough conviction of their own sinfulness, Ephes. iii, 8. 1 Tim i, 13, 15, 16. Rom. vii. Patience and joy in affliction, 2 Thess. i, 4. Heb. x, 34. Acts xiii, 52. Rom. v, 3. Willingness to die, and joy in the prospect of eternity, Philem. i, 23.

5. *Sufferings for Christ's sake.* Acts v, 40; vii, 58; viii, 1; xii, 2; xiii, 50; xiv, 22; xvi, 23. 2 Thess. i, 4.

This lovely picture might have been extended, but the above will suffice. Blots there were in-

The Epistles are letters which were written and sent by the apostles to the churches of Christ, or to particular persons. Jesus said to his disciples before his death, I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Indeed, many of the peculiar glories, duties, and blessings of Christianity, were so connected with, and dependent upon the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, that they evidently could not be generally declared till the facts had taken place. After the resurrection of Christ, the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel were revealed to the Apostles, and by them to the world, plainly and distinctly. Christ told his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit unto them, and he added, "he shall take of mine and show it unto you." John xvi, 15. The Epistles more fully display the doctrines of grace and the mysteries of godliness. They speak continually of Christ, and their great end seems to be to magnify his person, his salvation, and his glory.

St. Paul sometimes seems to wander from his subject, but it is only like the winding of a noble stream, which does not flow in a direct line to the ocean, but sometimes seems even to turn back: yet thus it fertilizes the country, and obtains fresh supplies of strength to pursue its course.

In order to obtain a general view of an epistle, Franck advises, "to read it as a letter from a friend three or four times over, without interruption, until you fully apprehend the meaning, and the subject of the whole becomes clear. In fact it should be perused, as it may be supposed the epistles which Paul addressed to the Corinthians were perused by them—frequently; not with many interruptions; not by chapters; but the whole read at once, until they perfectly understood the Apostle's mind."

Romans. This epistle was written to Christians whom the apostle had not yet seen, who lived at Rome, which was then the capital or chief city of the whole world. It contains a statement of the doctrines of the gospel, in regular order. The ground work, or first principles of the gospel, are given in the first five chapters; the blessed fruits arising from an experimental knowledge of those principles are displayed, in the privileges enumerated in the six following chapters, and in the precepts or moral duties of the five last. St. Paul shows that all mankind are guilty before God: and that the only way to be justified or accounted righteous in his sight, to obtain pardon, and a title to eternal life, is by believing with the heart in Jesus Christ. Not that faith merits salvation, but it has pleased God to appoint faith as the means, that salvation might be altogether through grace. He proves these doctrines by various arguments, and from the example of Abraham, and then shows their practical tendency. No part of scripture ought to be more thoroughly read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested. It is in entire opposition to all ideas of salvation by our own works, either in whole or in part. It sets before us free redemption, justification, and salvation in Christ Jesus alone, and yet shows us that the people of Christ will be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

I. Corinthians. Corinth was a large and wealthy city in Greece. Few churches were more blessed with miraculous gifts than that of Corinth: but these gifts becoming occasions of pride, no church was so corrupt. Paul stayed here nearly two years. Acts xviii, 9, 10.—He wrote this epistle to correct abuses, and give advice in some particular cases which had been submitted to him. We need not wonder at their being scandals and divisions in our day, since they existed even in the time of the apostles. Learn from this epistle the difference between gifts and grace, and not be discouraged at the want of the former, if you have the latter, which is infinitely more needful and valuable. Notice the admirable

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deed, but it may be safely said, this was the general character of the first Christians. They were the glory of their ministers, who could appeal to the lives of Christians for the excellency of the gospel.

For a further account of this Church see Milner's admirable History of the Church of Christ, in five vols. 8vo. a most interesting and truly valuable book.

description of Christian love in the 13th chapter, and of the resurrection of the righteous in the 15th.

II. Corinthians. St. Paul here defends himself from charges made against him, exhorts to reformation and threatens the impenitent. If Paul was unjustly reproached, why should Christians expect to escape reproach now; let us be more careful not to deserve censure, than to avoid it. Observe and imitate Paul's prudent and zealous measures in effecting a reformation. What he says of the love of Christ, of the new creature, and of God's beseeching sinners to be reconciled to himself, in the 5th chapter, is particularly important.

Galatians. Galatia was a province in Lower Asia. Paul here writes against false teachers, who mingled the Mosaic law and the gospel, as if men could not be saved by faith in Christ, without being circumcised and obeying the Jewish law, thus representing Christ as insufficient to save those who trusted in him. Man has always been prone to think that he may be saved *partly* by works of one kind or other, but Christ, and Christ alone, is the only and complete Saviour of sinners, redeeming those who apply to him both from the guilt and power of their sins. St. Paul proves in various ways, that we are justified by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. In the two last chapters he exhorts the Galatians to be fruitful in good works. Real faith ever worketh by love.

Ephesians. Ephesus was the chief city of Lower Asia. This epistle breathes nothing but affection. This church was evidently in a happy state, and in addressing it, St. Paul could pour out his whole heart. The first three chapters of this interesting epistle contain the doctrines, and the last three the practice of the gospel.—The order in which doctrine and practice are delivered, and the connexion between both are instructive.

Philippians. Philippi was a considerable city of Macedonia, and this church in a happy state of piety, and did not need reproof. The epistle was written to encourage them to walk worthy of the gospel; to warn them against false teachers, to exhort them to press forward, and to express his regard for their welfare. It shows the strong love which subsisted between ministers and people, in the first ages, and the blessed effects which the gospel produces, when cordially received.

Colossians. Colosse was a great city in Asia. The two first chapters of this epistle are doctrinal, the two last practical. This church likewise was in a flourishing condition. The epistle sets forth the glory of the Saviour; the completeness of his salvation and the fruits of faith.

I. Thessalonians. Thessalonica was the chief city of Macedonia. Probably this was the first epistle which Paul wrote. Though this church was only just raised, and much persecuted, it was in an excellent state.—Paul highly commends them, exhorts them to perseverance in holiness, and tells them of Christ's coming. Do we resemble these first Christians?

II. Thessalonians. This seems to have been written to comfort them in tribulation, and to guard against the mistakes into which some had fallen, as if the day of judgment was close at hand, and to warn those who neglected their business and employments on this account. The second chapter appears to contain a very striking prophecy of popery, under the characters of the man of sin and the mystery of iniquity.

I. Timothy. Timothy was converted under Paul's ministry; and after labouring some time with him, was appointed over the church at Ephesus. This epistle was written to assist Timothy in the duty of watching over that church, and it is useful for the direction of ministers in the discharge of their office, to the end of time. He foretells future apostacies, and exactly describes what we have since seen in popery; ch. iv, 1—4. See in Paul's example, what truly humble views of themselves real believers have, and examine your own heart.

II. Timothy. This was probably written near the close of Paul's life; and consists of exhortations to animate Timothy to endure persecutions with courage, and to caution him against false teachers. It describes in very striking

language, ch. iii, 1—5, that general corruption of Christianity, which we see every where around us in the characters of persons who profess a religion, they neither truly believe, nor faithfully practise.

Titus was converted under Paul's ministry, and after accompanying him some time was left at Crete, an island which is now called Candia. Paul here gives important and truly excellent advice to ministers, respecting the instruction and regulation of the church. We have here in a very few words a summary of the whole gospel, ch. ii, 11—14; and again, ch. iii, 4—8.

Philemon was a Christian of some eminence at Colosse. Onesimus his slave had run away, and afterwards was converted by the preaching of Paul, who sent him back to his master, with this truly kind and persuasive letter; what lessons it affords, and what a pattern it exhibits both to master and servant.

Hebrews. This epistle, generally considered to have been written by Paul, is intended to prove that the gospel plan of salvation was prefigured and foretold in the old testament; and that those who believed the latter, ought on that account to receive the former, and give up the shadow for the substance. He shows the superiority of Christ and the gospel Church. The beginning of this book (especially if you consult the references to the other scriptures) is a most striking testimony to the divinity of Christ. In chap. viii, he explains the difference between the Jewish covenant made at Mount Sinai, and the gospel covenant; and in chap. xi, he displays the admirable nature and effects of true faith, in many examples of the old testament saints. O that we may obtain like precious faith with them.

James wrote his epistle a short time before his martyrdom. The converted Jews seem to have been in a low state; they were hearers and not doers of the word. St. Paul's doctrine of free justification, was perverted and made an excuse for sin. This epistle was designed to correct these evils, and also to comfort sufferers under the cross. He here shows the chief practical errors of mere professors. Paul proves, against the self-righteous, that man is saved by faith; and James proves, against the licentious, that the faith which saves will ever lead men to obey God, and produce good works. They both bring the same example of Abraham. Where James speaks of justification by works, he does not mean that works are the *cause* of our being justified, but the *effects* invariably connected with it. Good works proceeding from faith, show that we are justified, and are also a test, by which we may judge ourselves, as to the reality and strength of our faith.

I. Peter. This epistle was written to the Christians in the different provinces of Asia Minor. The churches in that country were chiefly founded by St. Paul. The epistle was perhaps more particularly intended for the use of the Jewish converts, and designed to edify and comfort them in their afflictions. The great doctrines of the gospel are here sweetly and practically applied. The relative duties are also pointed out and explained.*

II. Peter, was written shortly before the apostle's death, to warn believers against false prophets, who perverted the gospel; and to exhort them not only to stand fast in the truth, but also to grow in grace.

I. John, was written by him when full of years, after the death of the other apostles. Heresies of various kinds began to abound. Some denied the godhead of Christ, and some his proper manhood. John here adapts his instructions to the exigencies of the times. He dwells much on Christ, as God manifested in the flesh, on the love of God, and on brotherly love. Here are marks and signs continually mentioned, whereby we may judge whether *we* are real Christians. Let us try and examine ourselves by these marks.

II. John, was written to some lady of rank and piety, to encourage her to persevere in the truth and love of God, and

* I cannot but refer such of my readers, as can obtain it, to Leighton's valuable commentary on this epistle. One person truly says, "There is a spirit in Archbishop Leighton I never met with in any human writings, nor can I read many lines in them without being moved."

to exhort her to beware of those heretics who denied the incarnation of Christ.

III. John, was written to Gaius, a man of great wealth, piety, and hospitality, to request him to help forward some missions among the Gentiles. It is equally addressed to us for the same end, as far as we have ability and opportunity.

Jude, was one of the apostles, and called also Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus. He wrote this epistle to guard believers against the same persons whom Peter, in his second epistle, had opposed; persons who pretended to trust in the divine mercy, while they lived an ungodly life: nominal Christians, but dead in trespasses and sins. Endeavour to understand by experience what he means, when he says, praying in the Holy Ghost: ver. 20.

Revelation, is so called because it consists chiefly of prophecies revealed to John, while living in banishment at Patmos. Many of these being yet unfulfilled, necessarily cause some difficulty in understanding this book. It was written by John at the close of his life, and relates to the Church of Christ from that period to the end of time. It describes (ch. i.) John's vision of Christ in glory; ch. ii. iii. the state of the seven churches of Asia, with suitable admonitions to each; (under one or other of the characters described you will find your own); ch. iv. v. gives a view of the Lamb on the throne, and the book of God's decrees as to future events; the remaining chapters show the contents of that book. The prophecies have been considered as dividing themselves into two parts. The first part proceeding nearly in a regular succession of historical events, from the 6th chapter to the 18th verse of the 11th. The second part (from the 19th verse of the 11th chapter) beginning again and containing an enlargement and illustration of the former, but in the same regular succession. This latter part is supposed to be designed as a supplement to the former, the first describing the destinies of the Roman empire, and the latter relating to the state of the Christian Church. The whole book contains many allusions to the temple at Jerusalem and its services, and to the priests and sacrifices. Here, indeed, are shallows in which the lamb may wade, and depths in which the elephant may swim. The descriptions of the Saviour, his love, his atonement, and his glory—of heaven and the happiness of redeemed souls, and of the awful destruction of the wicked, are so peculiarly striking and interesting, that those who cannot at all understand the prophecies, may be much edified by these things, which are so plain and obvious. Let us study and practice what is plain, and God will discover to us all that it is needful we should know. Lowth well says—"An ordinary reader may receive great edification from those noble hymns offered up to God and Christ, (ch. iv, 8—11. v, 9—13. vii, 12. xv, 3, 4.) and may likewise discover very useful truths, such as the adoration of the one supreme God, in opposition to all creature worship, (ch. ix, 20. xiv, 7. xxi, 8. xxii, 15;)—the relying upon the merits of Christ only for pardon, sanctification, and salvation, (ch. v, 9. vii, 14. xii, 11. xiii, 18.) and that we ought to wait patiently for Christ's appearing and his kingdom; and in an earnest expectation of it, to continue steadfast in the profession of the true faith and practice of sincere holiness, notwithstanding all the sufferings that may attend a good conscience. (ch. xiii, 10. xiv, 12, 13. xvi, 15.) All may learn those marks and characters of Antichrist which it most nearly concerns us to take notice of, viz. pride, ambition, and an affectation of worldly pomp and grandeur; a cruel and persecuting temper, seeking to reduce others rather by force and compulsion than by reason and argument; the love of ease and softness; and a careless and luxurious life; and that whoever are guilty of these things are so far departed from the true spirit of Christianity; and surely he that takes warning, from the plain and frequent admonitions of this book, to avoid these sins, has not wholly lost his labour in reading it, and withal has entitled himself to the blessing which is pronounced upon those who keep its sayings. (Rev. i, 3.)

CHAPTER. V.

Some Practical Remarks on various Subjects in the Bible, particularly on the Law and the Gospel.

The book of God like the book of nature, is full of wonders, and contains such an endless variety of matter, as may well engage the study and attention of our whole lives. It is like a rich landscape, beautifully varied with woods and hills, meadows and rivers; and yet, while there are heights and depths which none can measure, there is a road so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. I purpose briefly to mention some of the various subjects of which the Bible treats.

The *history* of the Bible contains the most ancient, and the only authentic account we have, of the origin of the various nations of the earth. It shows us, that God has ever had a church in the world; it exhibits the character of his people, and of the wicked, in various trying circumstances; it proves the corruption of human nature; and it plainly discovers to us, that God ordereth all things after the counsel of his own will. Observe how slightly mighty conquerors and kings, who have made so much noise in the world, are passed over: whilst in the lives of good men, circumstances which many are disposed to think insignificant, are dwelt upon with particularity. How short an account is given of Nimrod, the founder of Nineveh and Babylon, the two greatest cities in the world, whilst the various events of the life of Abraham, are described with great minuteness. This may teach us whom God most approves. History shows the fulfillment of prophecy. It affords us also, examples of the rules which God gives in his word, and thus greatly assists us in understanding those rules. In the Old Testament history there is a frequent display of types, the explanation of which, however, requires judgment and wisdom, a knowledge of their law, order, and right use. (*See Types.*) To read history profitably, you must inquire as you go along, is my character like that of this good man? May God make it so. Or unlike this evil man? May God keep me from his sin. Mark how sad the end of the wicked, but the end of the righteous is peace. Read the lives of good men as a pattern for your imitation, in those duties which belong to your calling. Thus endeavour to be upright among evil men, as Noah was in a corrupt world. Imitate the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the devotion of David, the zeal of Josiah, the boldness of Peter and John, and the indefatigable labors of Paul.

In studying history, endeavour to get clear ideas of some great periods, such as the creation of the world, 4000 years, B. C. The deluge, 2348 B. C. The calling of Abraham, 1921 B. C. The departure of Israel out of Egypt, 1491 B. C. The captivity, 588, B. C. The close of the old Testament history, 409, B. C. and the birth of Christ. Other events between these periods will then be more easily arranged in your mind.

Miracles are wonderful acts, or effects superior, or contrary, to the known laws of nature. The Miracles recorded in the Bible, prove to us the divine mission of those, by whom they were wrought. "No man," saith Nicodemus, "can do these miracles except God be with him." The truth of the scripture miracles was never denied in the ages when they were performed. Moses appeals to those who knew them, as being themselves witnesses for the truth of what he relates, and the apostles of Christ do the same. Let the miracles then confirm and strengthen your faith in the Saviour's power and love.

Prophecies are, as it were, a standing miracle. The chain of scripture prophecies accomplished in the present state of almost all nations—the Arabians, Africans, Egyptians, Jews, Saracens, Turks, Mahometans, Papists, and Protestants: and also of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Jerusalem, Rome, and the seven churches of Asia—furnish indeed an unanswerable argument of the truth of the Bible. This miracle is open to the observation of all mankind, and after so many ages is still growing—still improving as time advances, and as history interprets its meaning. Many of the prophecies will necessarily be obscure, partly from our ignorance, and partly because the events are not accom-

plished. Let this humble us and exercise our faith. But others, particularly those respecting Jesus Christ, will be plain and obvious. Feeble glimmerings of this great light of the world began to appear, immediately after the fall. The prophecies respecting him became more clear and minute, as their accomplishment approached. The whole chain of prophecy, first committed to the Jews, and still preserved by them, when compared with its fulfillment in Christ, affords another striking evidence of the truth of our religion, and is calculated to impress us with exalted views of that Saviour, so long expected, and to whom give all the prophets witness.* The spring of the waters of salvation, hid in the counsels of God before the time began, was opened immediately after the fall, and began to flow in a small but reviving brook. Increasing by degrees, and from the very beginning making every place it passed through fertile and pleasant, it soon became a large stream. At length the main current of the gospel flowed in and now it rolls on, full of water greatly enriching the earth, a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, and shall do so, till this river empties itself into the ocean of eternity.*

The history of the church of God seems to end, in the Bible, with the Acts of the Apostles, but prophecy contains a declaration from God, of what shall take place to the end of time.

There is a double sense in which prophecy is sometimes fulfilled: the first sense relating to some temporal blessings or deliverance of the Jews, and the second and fuller sense relating to the diffusion and blessings of the gospel. Thus the restoration of the Jews from the captivity, may be the ground-work of those predictions of the flourishing state of the church, described in such glowing language in the 40th and following chapters of Isaiah; but the prophet evidently enlarges his views to the spread of the gospel, and a more happy state than the church has ever yet been blessed with. The 72d Psalm may, in the first instance,

*Some of the most important of these predictions, with the passages in the New Testament, showing their fulfillment, are subjoined :—

Predictions.	*Fulfillment.*
Gen, iii, 15.	Gal. iv. 4. 1 John iii, 8.
xviii, 18. xxii, 18.	iii, 8, 17. Matt. i, 1.
xlix, 10.	John x, 36, xvii, 18, 21, 23.
Exod. xii, 46.	John xix, 33, 36.
Numb. xxiv, 17.	Rev. xxii, 16.
Deut. xviii, 15, 18.	Acts vii, 37.
2 Sam. vii, 12, 13.	Matt. i, 1.
Job xix, 25, 26.	1 Thes. iv, 16, 17.
	1 Cor. xv, 24, 26.
	1 Tim. iii, 16.
Psalm xl, 6, 7, 8.	Heb. x, 5, &c.
xli, 9.	Matt. xxvi, 47.
lxxxix, 19.	Col. i, 15. Rev. xix, 16.
viii, 2. cxviii, 25, 26.	Matt. xxi, 9.
cxviii, 22.	xxi, 42.
	Eph. ii, 20. 1 Pet. ii, 7.
ii, 1.	Acts iv, 26, 27.
xxii, and lxix.	Matt. xxvii, 35, 46, 48.
	John xix, 23, 24.
xvi, 10.	Acts, ii, 31. xiii, 33, 38.
	1 Cor. xv, 44.
lxviii, 17, 18.	Ephes, iv, 8. Col. ii, 15.
cx, 1, 4.	Matt. xxii, 42, 44.
	Acts ii, 33. Heb. v, 6.
	vii, 2, 3, 17.
xlv, 6, 7.	Heb. i, 8, 9, John iii, 34.
ii, 6, 7, 8.	Acts xiii, 33. Heb. v, 5.
	Rev. ii, 27.
xcvii, 7. cii, 25—27.	Heb. i, 6, 10, 11.
Isaiah vi, 9.	Matt. xiii. 13.
ix, 1, 2.	iv, 14—16.
vii, 14.	i, 20, 23.
xi, 10, ix, 6, 7.	viii, 14. Rom. ix, 33.
	1 Peter ii, 8.
xi, 1, 2.	John iii, 34. Col. ii, 3.
	John i, 32.
lxi, 1, 2, 3.	Luke iv, 18, 21.
xxxv, 4.	Matt. xi, 2, 6.
xl, 3.	Matt. iii, 1, 2, 3.
	1 Tim. iii, 16.
liii.	xxvi, and xxvii.

Predictions.	*Fulfillment.*
Jerem. xxiii, 5, 6.	Luke i, 32, 33.
Ezek. xxxiv, 23, 24.	
xxxvii, 21, 24.	John x, 1, 16. i, 49.
	xix, 19, 21.
Hosea xi, 1.	Matt. ii, 19, 20.
Dan. vii, 13, 14.	Matt. xxiv, 30. xxvi, 64.
	xxviii, 18.
ix, 24, 26.	Heb. ix, 26. John i, 41.
ix, 27.	Matt. xxiv, 15.
Micah v, 2.	Matt. ii, 1, 6. Luke ii, 4, 5.
Haggai ii, 6, 7, 9.	Luke ii, 10, 11, 27.
	Heb. xii, 26.
Zach. vi, 12.	Luke i, 78, 79,
ix, 9.	Matt. xxi, 5. John xii, 15.
xiii.	xxvi, 56.
xi, 12, 13.	xxvi, 15.
xii, 10.	John xix, 34, 35. Acts ii, 23.
Mal. iii, 1, 5.	Matt. xi, 10. iii, 1, 3.
Joel ii, 28, 29.	Acts ii, 16, &c.

* See Leighton on Peter.

relate to Solomon, but has evidently only a complete fulfillment in Christ.* There is also a spiritual sense, in which many of the prophecies may be usefully and practically applied for our edification. Thus we may consider the return of Israel from Babylon to Canaan, as resembling our return from the bondage and captivity of sin, to the freedom of the children of God and the heavenly Canaan.

A knowledge of *the state of the countries mentioned in the Scriptures* is of importance, as it explains many parts of the sacred writings. The mode of building their houses with flat roofs, the peculiarities of the atmosphere, the state of the seasons, the natural productions of the soil, and the condition of the neighbouring nations, are all useful to be known, as this knowledge satisfactorily accounts for many things otherwise difficult and obscure.†

A knowledge of *the time when events took place*, and when particular books were written, will assist you in understanding many parts of Scripture, particularly the Psalms of David and the prophecies. A Bible with marginal references, will greatly help you in this respect.

The *promises* of the Bible exercise, support, and strengthen our faith; and excite, guide, and encourage our prayers. They should cheer the heart of the Christian, even in the worst times. They convey and assure to him, under the zeal of God, who cannot lie, immense blessings here and hereafter. We should read them in the same spirit with which Abraham received them, "being persuaded, that what God has promised, he is able also to perform." We should long and pray for an interest in them.‡

There are *threatenings* also, and we should receive these in the same spirit with which Noah received the threatening of the deluge. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and Jesus Christ will be an ark to the soul of the sinner who feels his danger, and flies to him for refuge from eternal ruin.

There are *doctrines* to illuminate our minds, and animate our hearts, and *precepts* to be the guide of our daily conduct. The different parts of divine truth have particular places, where each is more expressly declared and explained. Thus, justification is chiefly treated of in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians; faith and its effects in the 11th of Hebrews; charity or Christian love in the 13th, and the resurrection of the righteous, in the 15th of the 1st Corinthians. It is useful to have a knowledge of such places, and you might with advantage form an index of them for your own use.

The *devotional* parts of the Bible, particularly the Psalms, give us both words and matter, for our addresses at the throne of grace. They show us the feelings of good men, when drawing near to God in prayer, and their religious experience in the various circumstances of life. Try to kindle your own devotion from their's, in simple dependence on the Holy Spirit.—Boyle said, "no book of *devotion* does constantly affect me so powerfully as the Bible."

Figurative language is continually used to represent divine truth. Milner says, who does not see, that divine things may often be more strongly and more simply conveyed to the understanding of the common people by parables and comparisons, than by abstract reasoning; God knows what suits his creatures best. An unlearned, simple mind, will feed on a divine truth conveyed in a type or emblem, and will receive a clear and strong impression in that way, when the capacity is not able to go through a strict course of reasoning. Many indeed, I fear have helped to strengthen the prejudice against figures, by the wrong, though

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* See Bishop Newton on the prophecies.

† Those who are able to pursue this subject, may consult Well's Geography of the Old and New Testament, Maundrell's Travels, Shaw's Travels, &c.

‡ See Clarke's Collection of Scripture Promises, with a useful introduction.

well meant use made of them. This however, lessens not their real use."

The figures are taken from nature, such as, light and darkness, sun, moon, and stars, &c.—from the persons and actions of holy men, as those of Moses, David, &c.—from the institutions of the law, as the sacrifices and feasts—and from the history of the Church, as the saving of Noah and his family from the flood. It is the excellence of this mode of speaking, particularly as it respects figures from nature, that it is not confined to any particular nation or language, but applies itself equally to all men in all nations. Words are changeable, and language has been confounded, but the visible works of nature speak to us now, as they spoke to Adam in Paradise.* The scripture itself generally contains a key to the figures, and is the best guide to their interpretation—as the book of Hebrews to the ceremonial law.

Type signifies a person or thing, that prefigures something to come. The word type does not occur in our translation of the Bible, (the Greek word, τυπος, being rendered, form, example) but the idea is given, 1 Cor. x, 6. Heb. x, 1. It means a model of the great things that were afterwards to be fully manifested. "It might be expected," says Cecil, "that when God had determined to send his Son into the world, there would be a train and concatenation of circumstances preparatory to his coming—that the history which declared that he was to come, should exhibit many patterns and things, which should form a grand preparation for the event, though not so many as an absurd fancy might imagine." The types of the Saviour were however very numerous, for no single type, figure, or shadow can fully point out to him who is the great antitype of all types, the substance of all figures and shadow. There were *typical persons*, as Adam, Melchizedec, and Moses, &c. *Typical things*, as Noah's ark, the Manna, &c. *Typical institutions*, as circumcision, not muzzling the ox treading out the corn, &c. *Typical places*, the city of refuge, Jerusalem, &c. *Typical utensils*, the ark of the covenant, the golden candlestick, &c. *Typical offerings*, the various offerings of the law. *Typical seasons*, the passover, pentecost, &c. *Typical purifications*, cleansing from leprosy, &c. "The old dispensation was typical, but the new is a dispensation unrolled—a dispensation of substance and realities. Much folly on the subject of allegorical interpretation has arisen from a want of holy awe on the mind."—*Cecil.*

Parables are a figurative representation of the truth, illustrating something we do not know, by a statement of something we do know, to impress it more strongly on the mind, such as those of the prodigal son, the lost sheep, &c. To understand a parable, you must chiefly attend to its scope or design, which may be gathered either from an express explanation, or from the introduction or conclusion.

A *Covenant*, is an agreement between two or more parties. There are various covenants mentioned in the scripture. The two which relate more immediately to the everlasting happiness of mankind, are those of works and of grace. The apostle briefly describes the character of both. (Rom. x, 5—11.) Both require righteousness, or perfect obedience to the law of God, as the condition by which we are to escape the curse, and to obtain the promise of that law. The covenant of works requires obedience from man. The covenant of grace shows us, that Christ has, for us, suffered the penalty of the law which we had broken, and fulfilled all its precepts in our place; and thus, by his mediation, the promises of the covenants are secured to those who believe; they are redeemed from the curse of the law by his death, and accounted righteous in the sight of God by his obedience. The nature of these two covenants will be further seen in the following observations on the law and the gospel.

A *Law* is a rule of action given by a superior to his subjects, and sanctioned by suitable rewards and punishments. The law which God gave to Adam, in paradise, was *a covenant of works*, and

* See Jones' book of Nature, and Jones on the figurative language of the scriptures.

required perfect obedience, under pain of death. Adam, as the father of the human race, did not act simply for himself, but his conduct in its result affected all his posterity. He had full power to obey the law given to him, but by his fall he broke it, became sinful and guilty, and incurred the penalty and curse; the whole race of men fell in him, (1 Cor. xv, 22,) so that if there had been no other covenant, he and all mankind would have been justly left in a state of sin, condemnation, and utter ruin, (Rom. v, 18, 19.) But it pleased God, who is rich in mercy, immmediately after Adam's fall, to reveal to him *the covenant of grace*, made with the second Adam, the promised seed of the woman. Of this covenant there have been, if the expression may be used, several editions or manifestations, beside that to Adam, viz. to the patriarchs—to Moses—and to the prophets. Each explained its nature more fully and clearly than the preceding. This may be easily traced in the list of predictions under the head prophecy, in this chapter.

The law which God gave by Moses to the Jews, was threefold. 1st. The *judicial*, or political law, for the government of the Jewish nation. 2d. The *ceremonial* law, prefiguring Jesus Christ, and his church and kingdom. This law was also useful in a way that we cannot now fully understand, in preserving the Jews from falling into the idolatries of the neighbouring countries. Many of the ordinances seem strange to us, having a particular respect to the religious customs of the nations around them. It was, besides, of great use in promoting a number of moral habits, and in uniting the people together as one body, separate from other nations: and 3d. The *law of moral conduct*, or those commandments which are usually called moral, and in that respect binding upon all. The ten commandments contain a convenient and comprehensive summary of the most important duties of the moral law, and include in their spiritual and full meaning that love to God and man which is the great character of that law. These commands are founded upon God's relation to the people of Israel as their governor and deliverer, and upon this ground they inculcate those great moral precepts, obedience to which would equally glorify the God of Israel, and promote the happiness of that nation so peculiarly separated and set apart from others as the people of God.*

The Jewish law, as a whole, answered many valuable ends. The church of God, was then, as it were, in its infant state. This law restrained sin by its lawful sanctions, kept Israel shut up or garrisoned from the heathen nations and their customs, gave many important hints of the gospel, and thus prepared the way for it, and served as a schoolmaster or tutor to conduct the people of God to Christ. Given in mercy, like the gospel, it convinced them of sin and of their need of a remedy, and in many respects pointed out the Saviour and redemption through his blood.

When we speak of the law in general, we mean the moral law as a covenant of works, and it is, in the main, in this view, that the law is opposed to the gospel, and distinguished from it by St. Paul, in the epistle to the Romans; though he sometimes uses the term in other senses. The following description of the law and gospel from Platon's Summary of Divinity, in the Greek church, seems clear and correct. He says, "The Holy Scriptures are divided into the law and the gospel. Under the term *law* we include all those

* There is a considerable difference in opinion respecting the nature of the law given on Mount Sinai. Perhaps it may be justly said, that many of the distinctions used are more artificial than those made in the New Testament, but the reader may probably like to see the following view given of it by Brown of Haddington.

As the ten commandments inculcate moral duties, were accompanied by thunder and lightning, and awful displays of the divine glory, and were sanctioned by the authority of God, they may be considered as a republication of the *covenant of works*. As they are introduced by the preface, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage," and were to be laid up in the ark, and to be attended with sacrifices, there appears in them a declaration of the *covenant of grace*, with the law as a rule of life. And as they were required to be observed in order to secure a happy entrance into Canaan, and a peaceful residence there, they may justly be considered as a *national covenant* between God and Israel.

passages in which God requires the exact fulfillment of his commandments, and for the breaking of which he threatens to inflict punishments. And by the word *gospel*, is to be understood all that respects the merciful promises of God, and that love wherewith our heavenly Father hath loved us, for the sake of his well beloved Son. Thus, the words which were spoken by God to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," belong to the gospel.

As a clear knowledge however of the law and gospel is exceedingly important, and throws much light upon scripture, it may be right to enter more into particulars.

The LAW is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. The precepts of it are thus summed up and described, and the promise is added:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself. This do and thou shalt live." It is evident therefore that the law is spiritual, and requires the obedience of the heart, as well as of the life. It also obliges every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience, (Matt. v, 48.) so that one single failure at any time, and in any instance, incurs its curse and penalties, temporal and eternal. (Gal. iii, 10. Jas. ii, 10.) It has various important uses. It is a complete standard of good and evil. It informs us what is the holy will of God, and what is our duty to him. By it every mouth is stopped, and the whole world becomes guilty before God—it thus discovers our sinfulness and weakness, humbles us, and shows us our need of Christ. It serves to alarm the wicked, and by its penalty and terrors keeps them from sin, and sends them to Christ for salvation, or leaves them inexcusable if they continue in sin. It teaches Christians their obligation to Christ, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and thus from gratitude to him who has redeemed them they are excited to greater care to live according to it as the rule of their obedience. They love this holy law; conformity to it is their constant aim and endeavour; and their falling short of it is their grief and burden.

The law is called the ministration of death and condemnation, because many of the commands in the Jewish law were sanctioned by the penalty of death; and also because, considered in its complete application, no human being, in our present fallen state, can possibly be justified or saved by his own obedience to it. It therefore leaves all men without hope.

The *gospel* is a gracious declaration of the good will of God to sinful men, and freely offers to all mankind, even to the vilest and most sinful, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and salvation through him from the guilt, and power of sin, to be received as a free gift upon their application to him through faith. Its character is thus described by the angel, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all* people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," and by our Lord, thus, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus Christ by his coming hath, through this gospel abolished death, and "brought life and immortality to light," in a far more clear, full, and enlarged manner, than it was by any former dispensation. Yet it was made known to the saints of old by prophecies, promises, sacrifices, types, and ceremonies, so that they believed in a Saviour who was to come, as we now do in a Saviour who has come.

The gospel is called the ministration of the Spirit, for it was made known by his teaching to the apostles, and by them communicated unto the world through his direction and influence; he applies it to the believer, and we receive the supply of that Spirit through Christ, "not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith." Christ hath received for his people the gift of the Holy Spirit, and he always imparts it to them, so that, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Very much of the true knowledge of religion consists in rightly distinguishing

between the law and the gospel. Many think all the New Testament must necessarily be the gospel, and all the Old Testament the law; but they are quite mistaken. The preaching of the law and the gospel is mixed together in both Testaments: and these two cannot be distinguished by books, as being one in this book, and the other in that, but by difference of matter, wherever it is found. Sometimes God speaks comfort by the gospel in the Old Testament, as when he comforted Adam with the promised seed of the woman. (Gen. iii, 15.) Isaiah again is full of the gospel. In the New Testament, Christ, in his discourses with the Pharisees and Jews, dwells and insists chiefly upon the works of the law: these, though contained in the New Testament, are the voice of the law, leading us to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

It is very important also to understand the true application of the *law* and the *gospel*, both to ourselves and others. When a person sees the excellence, purity, spirituality, and strictness of God's holy law, and his inability to perform it, and is oppressed and heavy laden with the burden of sin and the weight of a guilty conscience, so that he feels himself deserving God's wrath and eternal ruin, and his heart is softened and broken under the sense of his sins; let him go to the Saviour, believe the gospel, and obtain the sweet comfort of God's promise, free forgiveness of sin, through the grace of Christ, redemption by his blood, and deliverance by him alone, from the love and dominion of sin. The Saviour invites all such characters freely to accept these great privileges and blessings, saying, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." On the other hand, take special heed lest you deceive yourselves and "wrest the scriptures to your destruction." Worldly and sensual characters often apply to themselves the promises of the gospel, though they have never felt the burden and sinfulness of sin, nor fled to Christ for refuge, nor are partakers of his Spirit; and on the other hand, contrite hearts, for whom the joyful tidings are intended, often remain in a greater or less degree, entangled in the bondage of the law, distressed and wretched, instead of rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free.

The law sends the real Christian to the gospel for salvation and comfort, and again the gospel sends him back to the law, with new motives and new strength, to keep it as a rule of life, the rule to which he constantly endeavours to be conformed in his spirit, that he may glorify God and adorn in all things the doctrine of Christ his Saviour. Much, therefore, of the Christian life consists in rightly understanding, applying, and experiencing, the power of the law and of the gospel.*

These are not trifling distinctions. How are we to be justified in the sight of that God, before whom we must all appear to give account, is the most interesting subject that can engage our attention, and it is therefore frequently pressed upon our consideration by the inspired writers. There are but two ways described in scripture, by which God accounts man just—either through the righteousness arising from perfect obedience to the law, or through the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. There is no mixed plan of justification. Those, who are expecting to be justified, partly by their own works and partly by Christ, who suppose that he will make up what is deficient in their righteousness, are in reality seeking their salvation from the law. Christ profits them nothing, they will be condemned as transgressors of the law, and as unbelievers in the gospel. They may ascribe all their works to God, and thank him, as the Pharisee did, for enabling them to do those works, but all will not avail. If they do in one jot or one tittle, fail to fulfill the whole law, they are lost forever, while they remain trusting to their obedience to it. But on the other hand, "there is no condemnation

* The following is a list of some texts relating to the law and gospel, which may perhaps illustrate the preceding remarks.

Law. Rom. x, 5. Gal. iii, 12. Ezek. xviii, 4. Gal. iii, 10. Nahum i, 3. Rom. i, 18. 2 Cor. iii, 7. Rom. iii, 20. James ii, 10.

Gospel. Rom. x, 4; x, 10. Col. i, 14. Gal. iii, 13; ii, 16. 1 John i, 9. 1 Thess. i, 10. 2 Cor. iii, 8. Rom. iii, 21—26. Rom. i, 16.

to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." They are not under the law, but under grace, and they love God because he first loved them.

Reader, on what are you depending for salvation? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. If you are in Christ, you will have received the Holy Spirit, and you will daily bring forth the fruit of that spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. "If ye be led by the spirit, ye are not under the law." Try and examine yourself.

Thus I have endeavoured to give you some hints for understanding and improving various subjects in the Bible; but depend not upon human teaching alone, nor lean to your own understanding. Ask for wisdom from God. He has promised that he will give it liberally, and will not upbraid. James i, 5.

CHAPTER VI.

*On the Jewish State, including Remarks on their Feasts, Offices, and Sacrifices, the Seasons in Judea, and the religious Sects, mentioned in the Scriptures.**

The peculiarities of the Jewish state, are so connected, not only with the history, but also with the doctrines of the Bible, that our conceptions of many parts of scripture, and of circumstances which are frequently alluded to, both in the old and new testaments, must be very indistinct, unless we have some general view of the nature of the Jewish government, and the design of their festivals and ceremonies. A knowledge of these, and of some other things peculiar to the land of Canaan, will often throw new light upon passages of scripture, and enable us to read with interest and edification what might otherwise have seemed tedious and unimportant.

On every day throughout the year, one lamb was offered in the morning and one in the evening, as a burnt offering for the sins of the people. (Exod. xxix, 38, &c.)

God appointed the sabbath to be observed as a *weekly festival*. It was sanctified and set apart by him at the beginning of the world in remembrance of his having finished the work of creation. The sabbath appears to have been observed through every dispensation; but it was re-instituted at Mount Sinai, with an additional sanction as a memorial of the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt. (Deut. v. 15.) and to be kept with peculiar strictness; for if any profaned this day, they were to be put to death. (Numb. xv. 35.) The Jews were required to rest on this day from all labor, (excepting the priests, who might go through their duty in the temple service,) and to meet for the public worship of God. The daily sacrifice also was doubled. This day pointed out that rest which remaineth for the people of God in heaven.

The new moons were feasts observed at the beginning of every month; when the Jews rested from labor and offered special sacrifices, and the priests blew the silver trumpets. Numb. x, 10. xxviii, 11, &c.

The Jews had three great annual feasts, the Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles, at which all their males, who were able to travel, were to appear before God, at the place which he should choose for the residence of the ark and tabernacle. God promised that at those times no man should desire their land, (Exod. xxxiv, 23, 24.) and thus tried and rewarded their faith.

The passover was a yearly feast. The original Hebrew word signifies to *pass* or *leap over*. It was instituted in Egypt. When the time came in which God designed to deliver his people, he determined to slay the first born in every house of the Egyptians, thus convincing them in a most awful manner, that the God of

* The design in this chapter is merely to give a very brief outline of the above subjects. A complete view of them would have swelled the book too much. Those who wish for further information may consult Jenning's Jewish Antiquities, Lightfoot's Temple Service, Calmet's Dictionary, and Relando Antiquitates Sacræ Veterum Hebræorum.

Israel was the true God punishing them for their past evil conduct, and making them willing to let his people go. To escape this judgment, the Israelites were directed to take a lamb without blemish, and having killed it, to sprinkle the blood on the door posts, and when the destroying angel who was to slay the first-born of Egypt, should see the blood on the door posts, he was to pass over and spare the houses which were distinguished by this token. The Passover was to be observed on future occasions on the 10th day of the first month of the sacred year, i. e. reckoning the beginning of the year from the month Abib, which began generally about the middle of our March. The civil year began in September; and this double mode of reckoning should be kept in view to prevent confusion. Before the lamb was slain, all the leavened bread in their houses was to be destroyed. No bone of the lamb was to be broken, it was to be roasted whole, and the flesh was to be eaten on the 15th night with unleavened bread. This feast continued seven days, and because during this time all the bread that was eaten was to be unleavened, it was called the feast of unleavened bread. The first fruits of the barley harvest were at this period given to the priest and presented before the Lord. In some years, called intercalated years, (from having a month extraordinary added) the passover was kept a month later. The great intention of this feast was to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and it typified our redemption by Christ, who is expressly called "our passover," (1 Cor. v, 7.)

The PENTECOST, was so called because it was kept fifty days after the passover. It was called the *feast of weeks*, being held a week of weeks and one day, after the passover; and it was also called the *feast of harvest*, as it was kept at the beginning of wheat harvest, the first fruits of which were presented in a solemn manner. This feast appears at first, to have continued only one day. There were peculiar sacrifices appointed for this day. (Lev. xxiii, 9—21.) The intention of the pentecost seems to have been to commemorate the giving of the law from Sinai. On this feast day the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, and they began to preach the gospel in Jerusalem. It deserves attention too, that on the year of our Lord's crucifixion he rose from the dead on the first day of the week, on which day also the feast of pentecost fell. Thus two great Christian facts, the resurrection of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, each took place on the Lord's day.

The feast of TABERNACLES, was observed with peculiar solemnity, in the month of Tisri, the first month in the civil year, but the seventh month of the sacred year, reckoning from Abib. It was ushered in by the feast of *trumpets*, on the first day of the month, when the Jews rested from labor and offered sacrifices. This might be designed to commemorate the work of creation, and to prepare for the great day of *atonement* on the 10th of the month. This last day was a public fast and kept as a most holy day. The great design of it, appears to have been to make an atonement for the sins of the people, and it is evidently referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews in various places, as typifying the sacrifice of Christ. On this day alone, the high priest, after making an atonement for himself and his house, entered into the holy of holies in a peculiar dress. He was also to take two goats, present them before the Lord, and cast lots for them. One lot was to be a sin offering for the Lord, and the other for a scape goat. The high priest was to lay his hands on the head of the scape goat, confess over it the sins of the people, and send it away into the wilderness. (see Lev. xvi.) The feast of *tabernacles*, properly so called, began on the 15th day of the same month, and continued eight days. On the first day, they cut down branches of palm trees, willows, &c. and with these erected booths to dwell in during the feast. They also carried small bundles of branches to the temple, crying Hosanna. Various sacrifices were offered during these seven days. On the 8th day, the people drew water out of the pool of Siloam, and the priests poured it forth at the bottom of the brazen altar. But this appears to have been one of

their ancient customs, and not an appointment of the law. To this our Lord is supposed to allude, (John vii, 37.) It appears (from Nehem. viii, 14—18.) that the due observance of this feast had been greatly neglected by the Jews, and was restored by an attention to the plain directions of the word of God. Its design was to commemorate the Israelites dwelling in tents in the wilderners, (Lev. xxiii, 43.) previous to their settlement in the promised land.

Every seventh year was a SABBATICAL YEAR, or a year of rest, or release. The land was to keep a sabbath by resting this year from the plough, and the people were neither to sow seed, nor prune the vineyard. The spontaneous produce was to be the property of the poor, (Exod. xxiii, 11.) and the Hebrew bond servant was dismissed free. God promised so to command his blessings in the sixth year, that it should bring forth fruit for three years. (Lev. xxv, 1, &c.) In this seventh year the law was to be publicly read in the ears of the people, by divine authority. (Deut. xxxi, 10.) This was probably observed in the time of Joshua, and the elders who survived him. Israel then revolted to Baal, and as we do not find it mentioned in the subsequent history, it was probably afterwards kept merely as an æra of time, or civil institution. We find the neglect of it assigned as one reason for the seventy years' captivity. (2 Chron. xxxvi, 20, 21.)

The year of JUBILEE was observed every seventh sabbatical year, that is, every 50th year. The word jubilee signifies the sounding of a trumpet.* Notice of its approach was given on the evening of the day of atonement, and the Rabbins write, that every Israelite was required to sound the trumpet nine times. The jubilee had remarkable effects both on property and liberty. If an Israelite from poverty had sold his possession, it was to be restored to him in this year, for the land, says God, is *mine*, (Lev. xxv, 23,) and if from a similar cause he had sold himself, he was to be freed this year, for, says God, he is *my* servant.

This must have been a grand and delightful æra to Israel. When they heard the joyful sound (Ps. lxxxix, 15,) the captive was free, and the bondman set out for his native inheritance to enjoy liberty, plenty, and peace. Their privileges and property were again restored to them. By this institution, the possessions of the tribes were preserved in their respective families, and being restored again at the close of fifty years, there could be no disputed titles to property. The lineage of Christ, like that of every other Jew, being by this means intimately connected with the ownership of property, could be distinctly traced, and was indisputably proved. This festival preserved a well regulated equality of property without injustice, for all who bought or sold, knew that the year of jubilee was to come. It was also a season of religious reflection and improvement, and inculcated the virtues of humanity, and charity, by the release of the debtor and the captive. It was a remarkable type of the redemption by Christ. The analogy of the jubilee to the gospel will be seen at once, and seems plainly referred to by the Lord himself. (Luke iv, 19.)

The Jewish YEAR was divided into *six seasons*, each of two months' duration; taking in one whole month and the halves of two other months. They had different times from which they reckoned the beginning of the year, according to the objects they had in view. The sacred year began in the month of Abib, because in that month the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, (Exod. xii, 2,) and by this year, their festivals and religious services were regulated. Their civil year began in the month of Tisri.

Their months consisted alternately of 29 and 30 days, and when needful, they added an intercalary month, formed out of the surplus days in the year, and called it Veader, or 2d Adar. Their months of course could not exactly correspond with ours, as they answered rather to the moon than the month. Thus Tisri would include part of September and part of October.

The Jews began their day at the setting sun, and an hour with them was the

* Others derive it from a word signifying "to cause to bring back."

twelfth part of the time the sun continued above the horizon. The night was divided into four parts or watches, each lastingthree hours.

The weather in the land of Judea, is different from ours. The summer is perfectly dry, without intervening showers, and the winter is wet, rain falling for many days successively. The weather is not, however, the same throughout Judea. It is hottest near Jericho, and coldest near Lebanon.

The following calendar* may serve to explain the seasons, and periods of the festivals more clearly.

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* The remarks on the Weather and Productions, &c. in this Calendar, are taken from Buhle's Calendar of Palestine, in the Fragments added to Calmet's Dictionary.

CALENDAR OF THE JEWS, showing the seasons of the Year, the time of the Public Festivals, the State of the Weather, and some of the Productions of the earth in Palestine.

Jewish Months.	*Ans. to the Moons of*	*Mths. in the Civil Year.*	*Mnths. in the Sacrd Year.*	*Seasons.*	*Festivals, &c.*	*Weather, Productions, &c.*
Tisri, or Ethanim. 1 Ki. viii, 2. 2 Ch. v, 3.	Septem.	1st.	7th.		1. Feast of Trumpets. 10. Day of Atonement. 15. Feast of Tabernacles. 22. Last day of the Feast.	Great heat in the day, and the nights cold. Rain frequently falls at the end of this month. There are abundance of grapes ripe. They begin to plough and to sow.
Marchesvan.	October.	2d.	8th.	Seed time.		Sometimes the rainy season (called the *early* or *former* rain.) does not commence till this month. The extreme heat is now abated. The dew is more plentiful than with us. Wheat and barley are sown. The latter grapes are gathered.
Cislieu.	Novem.	3d.	9th.		25. The Feast of Dedication.	If the rainy season has not begun, it certainly commences this month. The heat of the sun is considerable in day-time, but the nights are very cold. The general sowing of corn is in this month.
Tebeth. Es. ii, 16.	Decem.	4th.	10th.	Winter.		Rains fall in this month. The cold is sometimes very piercing, so that persons have perished from cold, but the snow seldom remains all day on the ground. The grass and herbs spring up after the rains.
Shebeth. Zech. i, 7.	January.	5th.	11th.		15. Beginning of the Year of Trees.	There is snow on the mountains, but near Jericho the cold is hardly felt. The winter is chiefly remarkable for frequent showers, which fall more in the night than day time. Corn is still sown. The winter fig is still found on the trees, though stripped of leaves.
Adar. Veader comes in here when an additional month is wanted.	Febru.	6th.	12th.	Cold Season.	14, and 15. The Feast of Purim.	Chiefly remarkable for rain. Towards the end of this month the snows and winter colds cease. Barley sometimes sown at Aleppo, till the middle of this month.

Jewish Months.	*Ans. to the Moons of*	*Mths. in the Civil Year.*	*Mnths. in the Sacrd Year.*	*Seasons.*	*Festivals, &c.*	*Weather, Productions, &c.*
Nisan or Abib.	March.	7th.	1st.		14. The P. Lamb killed. 15. The Passover. 16. The first fruits of the Barley Harvest presented.	Rain, called the *latter* rain' frequent. Great heat in the plains of Jericho, persons have perished through the heat of the sun.
Exod. xii, Nche. ii, 1.					21. The end of the Passover; and unleavened Bread	The rivers swell from the rain, and the thawing of the snow. Barley ripe at Jericho, but little of the wheat in the ear. The fig tree blossoms, even while the winter fig is on the tree. The vine produces the first clusters; about Sidon they have a triple produce in the year.
Jiar, or Iyar.	April.	8th.	2d.	Harvest.		Frequent rains—heats excessive near Jericho. The harvest depends on the duration of the rainy season. Barley is generally cut down this month. Wheat begins to ripen.
Sivan.	May.	9th.	3d.		6. Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks The First Fruits of the Wheat Harvest presented.	The excessive heat renders the earth barren, as a sharp winter does with us—the north and east winds increase the heat. The west wind decreases it at Aleppo.
Est. viii, 9.						The snow on Libanus thaws rapidly. Barley sometimes not all cut down till this month. Wheat is cut down in this month. The grass and herbs have grown in some places a yard high.
Thammuz, or Tammuz	June.	10th.	4th.	Summer.		The weather is extremely hot, not cold even in the night—rain is now very rare. The inhabitants pass their nights on the roofs of their houses. The rice and early figs ripen.
Ab.	July.	11th.	5th.		9. The Temple taken on this day 1st. by the Chaldeans, and afterwards by the Romans.	The heat is still more intense. Libanus is for the most part freed from snow, excepting places not exposed to the sun. Ripe dates at Jericho.
Elul.	August.	12th.	6th.	Hot Season.		The sky is serene and fair and the heat extreme.' Ripe figs at Jerusalem, and ripe olives near Jericho. Grapes are ripe, and the clusters very large.

The SACRIFICES, properly so called, may be divided into two general parts *bloody* or *animate*, and *unbloody* or *inanimate*. The first were of three sorts, *whole burnt offerings*, *sin offerings*, and *peace offerings*. It will be proper to set down what was common to them all. 1. Sacrifices in general were holy offerings, but the public ones were the holiest. 2. It was unlawful to sacrifice any where but in the temple. All sacrifices were to be offered in the day time, never in the night. 4. There were only five sorts of animals which could be offered up, namely, *bullocks*, *sheep*, *goats;* and among birds, *pigeons*, and *turtle doves*. All these animals were to be perfect, and without blemish or spot. Certain ceremonies were to be observed in every sacrifice, some of which were performed by those that offered it, as the laying their hands on the head of the victim, killing, flaying, and cutting it in pieces, and washing the entrails of it; others were to be done by the priests, as receiving the blood in a vessel appointed for that purpose, sprinkling it upon the altar, which was the most essential part of the sacrifice, lighting the fire, setting the wood in order upon the altar, and laying the parts of the victim upon it. 6. All sacrifices were salted.

The unbloody or inanimate sacrifices were. 1. The offerings and libations. 2. First fruits. 3. Tenths. And 4. Perfumes. They were forbidden to mix honey with the offerings, and salt was absolutely necessary in every oblation.* Mark ix, 49, 50. Col. iv, 6.

Beside these sacrifices, the Jews had many ceremonies appointed for purification: they had *places* which were considered *sacred*, or set apart for some particular purposes, as the tabernacle and its court, the holy of holies, and afterwards, when they came to be settled in their own land, the cities of refuge, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple. They had also many *holy things* as the ark, the altar of incense, the table, the candlestick, the laver, the altar of burnt offering, the holy garments, &c.

*See Beausobre and l'Enfant's Introduction to the New Testament.

To enter into a description of these would be unnecessary; they were of a mixed character, ceremonial, moral, civil, and political, typifying in many respects the gospel of Jesus Christ. The general nature of the law of Moses has already been pointed out, under the account of the law and the gospel; but the precise objects of all these particular parts are not fully understood.—Some of them, like many of the unfulfilled prophecies, are now obscure, but we may, perhaps, expect that they will be made manifest hereafter.

With respect to the sacrifices, it may be observed generally, that no particular sacrifices were appointed for offences of a moral nature, except in a few prescribed instances; although as the sins of the people were to be confessed over the head of the goat of the sin offering on the day of atonement, the high priest would not forget the acknowledgement of their moral transgressions: yet so completely did their sins exceed the means provided by the ceremonial law for their being purged away, that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the sentiments of the thoughtful and serious Jews are strongly expressed, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb. x, 4.) They showed the need of the better sacrifices of Christ, by whom "he that believeth is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts xii, 39.)

We will now briefly notice the nature of the *Jewish government*. It is evident that it was quite peculiar. It has been rightly called a *theocracy*. God himself was not only the object of the worship of Israel, but if the expression may be used, the political owner of their country. He governed them immediately, not only by the laws which he had given them, but by appointing peace and war; going before them to battle, and directing them in various circumstances of their lives.—All the land belonged to him, and was held as it were in fee under him, as the chief lord of the soil.—Hence when they desired a king, it was considered as rejecting the government of God. (1 Sam. viii, 7.)

The *high priest* was the first character in the Jewish government, and the medium of communion with God. He was consecrated to his office with oil, composed of the richest ingredients and perfumes. He wore two kinds of garments; one of which was worn in his usual services, (Exod. xxviii.) and the other was only put on when he entered alone once a year, on the great day of atonement, (Lev. xvi.) into the most holy place which was a figure of the true heavens. (Heb. iv, 6.) He had a breastplate on which were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel that he might bear them as a memorial before the Lord, when he went into the holy place. (Exod. xxviii, 29.) He is pointed out to us in the Hebrews as a remarkable type of Jesus Christ.

The *priests* were the ministers of religion for common purposes. They were all descendants of Aaron, to whose family the priesthood was confined, and the officiating priests were to have no defect of body. They conducted the temple service, and offered the sacrifices to God, of which they partook for their maintainance. They were to decide who were clean and unclean, and were publicly to teach the law of God to the people. They were many, because no one man could do what was needful to keep up the whole system of sacrifices; and because of their morality, a succession was indispensably necessary. But they were all of one family, and, viewed as a body, they point our attention to one great high priest, and their whole exertions may be considered as figurative of one great atoning sacrifice. "The priests that offer gifts according to the law serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." (Heb. viii, 4, 5.) Thus the Levitical priesthood was a shadow of the priesthood of Christ.

The Levites were the descendants of Levi, and they were taken into the service of God instead of the first-born of all the tribes of Israel. They waited on the priests, doing the lower service of the sanctuary. They were dispersed also among the tribes as teachers of the people, and as magistrates or judges. They had no inheritance in the land, though they possessed cities, for God was their inheritance, and he gave them *the tithes* of the increase of the land, as a reward for their service in the tabernacle. (Numb. xviii, 20, 32.)

We have now seen that God appointed a variety of seasons and festivals, ceremonies and offices among the Jews, and that they were designed for various important purposes: to perpetuate the memory of his great works; to afford the Jews frequent opportunities of instruction; to form useful sentiments and habits; constantly to keep in view their subjection to him, as their deliverer and governor; and farther, one great intention of the whole was, to point out Jesus Christ and the blessings of the gospel. They were figurative, and shadows of things to come, Christ being the body, or substance. (Col. ii, 17.) Hence the law is said to be a "shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." (Heb. x, 1.) It may reasonably be doubted whether the Jews understood the complete intention of their own ceremonies; but we know that the pious amongst them believed in a Saviour to come. "Abraham rejoiced to see his day and was glad." (John viii, 56.) The church of God however, in its infant state, (Gal. iv, 1—3, &c.) was taught by its great parent, things of which it could not perhaps comprehend the full meaning, but which were still very useful, as elements preparatory to farther instruction. This the epistle to the Hebrews plainly manifests.

Dr. Buchanan says, "From the early oblivion of many of the divine ordinances, and from other circumstances, it evidently appears, that the law of Moses was intended by providence to be of more use, as to example and practical benefit, to the Christian than the Jewish people, (see 1 Cor. x, 11.) The volume of the Pentateuch has probably been more studied, and more spiritually understood, and has also been more largely productive of the fruits of righteousness, under the Christian, than under the Jewish dispensation. The first, or golden age of Israel does not seem to have extended much beyond a hundred years from their arrival in Canaan. The glory of Israel,

was indeed revived in the days of David and Solomon, but even this lasted but a short time. It existed as it were, but for a moment, merely to be a type of another kingdom, the more striking for its being short.

The feasts and offices which have been described, were appointed by the law of Moses, but other feasts were added, and other classes of persons were afterwards formed amongst the Jews; and it may be useful to give a very brief account of some of these.

The feast of *Purim*, or lots, was instituted to commemorate their deliverance by the providence of God from the massacre, which Haman had designed, and for which he had procured a decree. (See Esther.)

The feast of *Dedication* was instituted by Judas Maccabæus; to commemorate the recovery of the temple, and its dedication to the service of God. (John x, 22.)

The Jews have many other feasts and fasts: but as they do not appear to be alluded to in scripture, they need not be mentioned here.

The *Prophets* were persons whom God raised up and sent, as teachers and instructors, to revive the spirit of religion among the people, and to foretell such future events as he thought fit to reveal.

The *Nethinims*, (from *Nathan*, given or offered) were made servants to the priests and Levites, and appointed to perform the meaner offices in the house of God.—They are supposed to have been chiefly the descendants of the Gibeonites, whose lives were spared by Joshua. (Josh. ix, 27.) They were appointed by David for the service of the Levites. (Ezra viii, 20.)

The *Nazarites*, were persons separated or devoted to God either for life, or a limited time. (Numb. vi, 2, &c.)

The *Scribes* were the writers of the law. The doctors and lawyers were of this class. Their original office was to make copies of the law; but they soon began to read and expound it. In the time of our Saviour they had almost laid aside the scriptures for their traditions, which had then grown large: these in the new testament are called *the traditions of the elders;* and in other writings the *Misnah;* or the oral or traditional law. To this they were too much attached; being inclined rather to interpret the scriptures by their traditions, than to make their traditions bend to the authority of the scriptures.

The religious sects mentioned in the scriptures were: The *Pharisees* or separatists so called, because they separated from others, under profession of particular strictness. "They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. (Luke xviii, 9.) Extremely particular in small things, they neglected justice, mercy, and faith. Under a profession of extraordinary sanctity, they were hypocritical, proud, censorious, and covetous.

They substituted human traditions in the room of revelation, and they expected to be saved by their works. Jesus Christ often severely reproved them for perverting the word of God.

The *Sadducees*, so called from Sadoc, the founder of the sect. They denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the existence of angels or spirits. They were the men of pleasure of their day.

The *Herodians* shaped their religion to please Herod, and it is said professed to believe that he was the Messiah. They sought to please man and feared man more than God.

The *Samaritans* were the descendants of the nations whom the kings of Assyria settled in the country of the ten tribes, and who were intermixed with some of the people of Israel. They established a mixed system of religion compounded of Judaism and Heathenism, and there was great enmity between them and the Jews.

The *Stoics* were a sect of heathen philosophers, who prided themselves in an affected indifference to pleasure or pain. They professed to consider virtue as its own reward, and maintained that all events were determined by *fate*, and not by the direction of the divine being. They held also that a wise man ought to be free from all passions.

The *Epicureans* were a sect of heathen philosophers, who ascribed all

things to chance, and considered pleasure as the chief good.

The *Nicolaitans* were a corrupt sect of heretics, who allowed themselves to partake of the sacrifices of the heathen, and to practise adultery without check or remorse.

In conclusion, we may observe the wisdom of God, in permitting such a variety of opinions to arise before the canon of scripture was closed; as by this means we have the testimony of his word on every difference of moment that can happen. Thus the Bible not only shows us the truth, but also marks out and condemns those errors to which the human mind is most prone.

CHAPTER VII.

An Explanation of some Expressions peculiar to the Scriptures.

Every science has its peculiar terms and expressions, which appear difficult to those who are ignorant of it, but convey clear ideas to such as have made that science their study. In some measure this is true of religion; the first of all sciences, the most advantageous of all studies. Here God himself is the teacher, and he takes this as his peculiar title, "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit."

The terms and expressions used in the Bible, are generally taken from common occurrences in life, and admirably illustrate the truth which God has revealed. The object of this chapter, is to endeavour, briefly to explain a few of those forms of speech which are peculiar to the Bible. Fully to exhibit their spirit and meaning, would require many volumes; only a few hints can therefore be given on each. Let the reader, however, endeavour to attend to such phrases when he meets with them, and not pass carelessly over them.

The expressions intended to be explained, relate to God the Father, to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, Faith in Christ, the state of man by nature, his state by grace, and to God's justifying us, or accounting us righteous through the atonement of Christ.

With respect to God the Father. He is called a *Father*, because he is the creator and supporter of all men, particularly because he is the author of the spiritual life of those who believe in his word, and love him as their preserver unto his heavenly kingdom. He is called *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to show the intimate connexion between the eternal and invisible God, and Jesus Christ our Lord, who is described as his only son, possessing a common nature with him, and in certain important respects one with him; so that God is *his* father, in a sense that applies to no one else. Hence, the term points out a relationship which, from the nature of the subject, we cannot explain. This expression also shows the connexion between the Father and Jesus Christ in his mediatorial capacity, which is so frequently and distinctly pointed out in the new testament. He is *the Father of the spirits of all flesh*, as the spirits of all men are created by his power. He is *the Father of lights* as the source of wisdom and knowledge, which he communicates to his creatures in such degrees as it pleases him. It is said, God *lifts up the light of his countenance* on his people; that is, he manifests his presence, favor, and love to them, as a tender father does when he smiles upon a son with whom he is well pleased. Again, it is said, he *hides his face* from them; that is, they are sometimes deprived of communion with him, and have little or no sense or perception of his favour towards them. They are also said to enjoy *the presence of God*, or the manifestation of God to their spirits, as he visibly manifested his presence by the shekinah, or divine appearance, to the people of Israel. He is also their *portion*, their souls are satisfied in him as an all sufficient good.

The grace of God, is the undeserved favor and kindness of God to us, arising entirely from his own will. It is the spring and source of all the benefits we receive from him.

With respect to Jesus Christ, he is called *the only begotten Son of God.*

The scriptures do not explain the nature of the union of the Father and the Son; but this expression points out the intimate relationship which subsists between them, and may teach us the immense love of God te sinners, in that he spared not his own Son. (*See the observation on the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*) He is called the *word of God.* A word is the birth of the mind, the expression of the purposes and counsels of the heart, and thus Christ is called the word of God, as he is the manifestation of the purposes and glory of God, and especially of his wisdom and love in our redemption. He *was with God, and was God*, partaking of the same divine nature: united most intimately to him, and therefore entitled to the worship and honor which creatures owe to their creator.* He is the *heir of all things.*—From his character as Son of God, he inherits all the power and glory of his heavenly Father; even as an heir inherits the estate, which in due time, he is to possess. *The brightness of his Father's glory.* Jesus Christ is the manifestation of that glory in its most illustrious and benificent displays; even as the rays which proceed from the sun convey to us all that we know and all that we feel of its glory; and the express image of the Father's person: the very counterpart of it, even as the impression is the counterpart of the seal. The *The first-born of every creature.*† The head and ruler of all created beings. Fisst born in power and authority. He took upon him the form of a servant: though as "God over all," he possessed universal dominion, yet by taking our nature upon him he submitted to appear as a creature, subject and obedient to God. "He was put to death in the flesh; his human nature suffered death, but he was quickened by the spirit; raised by the Holy [Spirit from the dead. He was *made sin for us*, he stood in our place, and though he was perfectly holy, the consequences of our transgressions were charged upon him; he was made an offering for sin on our account, and thus he redeemed us; purchasing his church with the price of his precious blood. *He is our life*, he is the cause why we live; he having died, and risen again, communicates spiritual life to all that believe in him, and supports and maintains this life, and thus prepares them for eternal life, the gift of God through Christ. He *gave himself a ransom for all.* The whole human race being by nature children of wrath, in bondage to sin, and the captives of Satan, Jesus freely gave himself as the price of their redemption, and thus obtained complete deliverance for

* The ancient Jews frequently used the expression *the word of God;* and though it is not easy to say exactly, what they intended by it, yet they appear always to have meant, either God, or some display of his power and glory.

† The apostle shows his meaning by what follows. After bringing forward Christ in this character, he adds, *For by him were all things created*, &c. which is the most complete reason possible, why he should be the head and the ruler of the whole.—But if a lower station be assigned him, the reasoning fails.—For it would not follow, that because he created all things, he was either the *first created being* in point of time, or the *first of created beings* with respect to any qualifications whatever: since neither the *first* in existence, nor the *first* in excellence, among creatures, could be more than a creature: and neither reason nor revelation gives us any ground to suppose that any creature can create others. But if the proof that Christ was *the first born of every creature*, be this, that *by him were all things created*, it is manifest that the apostle designed to hold him up as *Lord over all*, in consequence of his being *the creator of all;* and thus his reason explains his meaning.

It deserves attention also, that this term is often applied by the Jews in the sense of *head* and *chief.* Thus the *first-born of death shall devour his strength*, Job. xviii, 13, which means some incurable disease; death in its full power, which will certainly bring its victims to the grave. So it is said of the heir of the house of David, *I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.* Ps. lxxxix 27. i. e. I will distingnish him above the rest, and his throne shall be exalted above theirs. Again, *I will be a father unto Israel, and Ephraim shall be my first-born.*—Jer. xxxi, 9. Or, the ruling tribe of Israel, which shall be eminent above the others; for we know that Ephraim was not *literally* the *firstborn* of Joseph, nor was Joseph his father the first-born of Jacob. "The Jews make the word *first-born* to be synonymous with the word *king*, and explain it by—*a great one and a prince.*" Gill in Col. i, 15.—They also speak of God as *the first-born of the world!* Wetstein in loc. A longer account than usual has been given of this expression, to take away the difficulties which some have felt, respecting its application to our Lord Jesus Christ.

all classes and ranks, all sorts and conditions of men. He *is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.* "Through his atoning sacrifice on the cross and his subsequent intercession, he rendered a holy God propitious to sinners, so that he waits to be gracious on the true mercy seat or propitiatory, of which that above the ark of the covenant was a type—nor is this benefit confined to the Jews, sinners all over the whole earth are admitted to share in it, so that his obedience to death is an all-sufficient atonement for the sins of all men in every land and through successive ages." He is *made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* Whilst we are ignorant, guilty, unholy and condemned, God has appointed Christ to give us *wisdom* by his word, his spirit, and his example; *righteousness*, by his obedience to the law for us; *sanctification*, through the power of his grace, that we may be renewed, and made holy and meet for heaven; and full *redemption* from the grave, hell, and endless ruin; and admittance at the last day, to eternal glory in heaven. He is *the resurrection.* His people are united to him by faith, and considered as members of that body of which he is the head, and because he lives they shall live also. Having risen from the dead, and carried with him into heaven that body in which he suffered and died, he has given us both an earnest and a pledge of our resurrection.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the undeserved kindness and love of Christ, shown not only in his voluntary undertaking to become obedient to the law for us, and to suffer in our stead even unto death, but also in the help and strength which he affords us.

Faith in Christ, is a reliance upon Christ for the fulfillment of his promises, and especially those which he has made to save them who trust in him for eternal life. As this is the most important grace given to the Christian, and the source of every excellence in his character, it is described in scripture in a vast variety of modes. Where faith dwells in the heart, a conviction of our guilty and dangerous state as sinners, of our total inability to help ourselves, and a renunciation of all hope in any other mode of deliverance is presupposed. The sinner hearing of this way of salvation, believes the testimony of God concerning Christ, and trusts in Christ alone, for pardon, righteousness, life, and full salvation, as offered in the gospel. He views him as a prophet, who came to teach him the way to heaven; as a priest, who offered a full atonement for sin, and who intercedes with God in behalf of all who seek mercy in his name; and as a king, who is exalted, that he might reign in his heart, regulate his conduct, subdue all his spiritual enemies, and in all things be acknowledged as his Lord.

This faith, is *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* It apprehends as realities, things not yet possessed, but which are confidently expected by the believer on the ground of God's promises. And it is a conviction impressed on the mind of the existence of things which are not visible to our bodily eyes.* The believer looks unto Jesus, he views him as his only saviour. As the Israelites, when bitten by fiery serpents, looked to the brazen serpent that they might be healed and delivered from death, so we are to look to Christ, to be healed of our spiritual diseases, and delivered from eternal death: and we are also to view him as a pattern for our imitation. The believer also comes to Christ, he listens to his invitation, trusts in his promise, and waits on him in his appointed way for salvation. As beggars go to a rich man for relief; as scholars come to their tutor for instruction; as rebels, when pardon is offered, submit themselves to the king; and as we in distress, would go to a wise, powerful,

* The faith of the Christian may be illustrated by the conduct of the patriarchs: they believed the promise of God, that he would give to their descendants the land of Canaan, and this faith guided all the great lines of their conduct. Though they had not Canaan in possession, yet from their firm persuasion that God would fulfill his word, Jacob, and after him his son Joseph, directed their bones to be carried thither. They considered what God had promised as a reality, though they only enjoyed it in hope, and they were strongly convinced that it would take place, because God had promised it, though all appearances seemed to oppose their expectation.

and kind friend, for comfort, so should we come to Christ. He calls on his name, he worships him, and earnestly entreats his help. He is in Christ, united to him and considered one with him, as a member is in the body, or as a branch in the vine, and thus partaking of life from him. He abides in him. As the branch by abiding in the vine, bears fruit, and receives its life and nourishment from the stock, so the Christian continues to receive living influence from Christ; and thus manifests the fruits of faith in all those holy tempers and dispositions which adorn the gospel. He receives Christ, welcoming him into his heart as his only Saviour: and he puts on Christ, he endeavours to have the same character, the same purity, holiness, meekness and love, so that all may know whose disciple he is, by his life and conduct. He therefore follows Christ, imitates his example, openly professes subjection to him, and obeys his commands. He eats his flesh and drinks his blood, believing on an incarnate Saviour, he makes his atoning sacrifice the food of his soul: resorting to that as the support of his hope, as he does to daily food for the support of his body. He enjoys the communion of his body and of his blood, when he receives the Lord's supper. The bread and wine exhibit visible memorials of his Redeemer; they point out to him the benefits of his righteousness and death, and of those benefits he partakes through faith. Believers are thus one with Christ, and with each other, as the bread, though distributed, is part of one loaf; and the members, though many, are parts of one body. He is crucified with Christ, interested in his death, and daily dying to sin. The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith. That righteousness, which comes from God and is needful for the salvation of sinners, is manifested in the gospel; and we see it and embrace it, by faith only, and eminently. Salvation is received and applied by faith from first to last, and one degree of faith prepares the believer for another.

With respect to the HOLY SPIRIT. *He seals us unto the day of redemption.* The Spirit of God by producing holiness of heart, impresses and stamps the divine image on the soul, as a seal stamps an impression upon wax, and thus he makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Those who are partakers of this spirit, walk after the spirit, their minds are fixed on spiritual things, and the great object of their lives is to live under his influence. To grieve the Spirit, is to displease him by sin, as an undutiful son grieves a tender parent. To resist the Spirit, is to oppose his influence on our minds, and to refuse to be led by him, because we love sin better than holiness. To quench the Spirit, is, by indulgence of sin, or by the careless and wilful neglect of the means of grace, to oppose his convictions and lose his assistance; as a cheering fire may be extinguished by being plunged in water. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, is that sin of which the Jews were guilty, who although they were eye witnesses of the power of the Holy Ghost, yet obstinately and maliciously ascribed it to Satan, and thus completely rejected the gospel in its fullest evidence. The communion of the Holy Ghost, means, living under his influence, and having fellowship with him.

With respect to MAN IN HIS NATURAL STATE. He is described as shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, having a strong natural tendency and predisposition to evil, and an aversion from good, inherited from his parents; by nature the child of wrath, being born with sinful inclinations, which, as he grows up, lead him away from God and thus incur his anger, and render him liable to condemnation. He is dead in trespasses and sins, so completely under the dominion of sin, and in love with it, that though he is not dead to it, he is dead in it, since he has no love to God, nor delight in spiritual things. Such are in the flesh, in the natural state as descended from our first parents; carnally minded, their minds and hearts are engaged in bodily gratification, and earthly things. They walk after the flesh; their minds are fixed on worldly objects, and the great aim of their lives is to gain nothing higher than earthly good. They pursue the pleasures of sin in willing bondage,

as a servant follows a master whom he loves. They live to themselves, their will is unbroken, unsubdued by divine grace. They seek to gratify their own purposes, and do not submit themselves to God. They are conformed to the world; like the men of the world, they approve their maxims, adopt their sentiments, and follow their example; living according to the lust of the flesh, the desires of their sensual appetite; the lust of the eye, the gaiety and empty show of the world; and the pride of life; the various objects which our ambition may prompt us to seek. Thus they walk after the course of this world; going with the opinions, and after the examples of those who look not above the things of time and sense. They live to the lusts of men, obeying men rather than God.

With respect to THE GOSPEL. It is the power of God unto salvation, as it is the way in which God exerts his power in saving sinners. God executes the whole plan of their deliverance: he is the author and finisher of it. It is the wisdom of God, as it is an eminent display of it in recovering sinful man, while it brings glory to God. It is the savour of life unto life to the people of God, as a powerful aromatic revives the fainting body, so the gospel revives the dying soul, imparting life; spiritual life here, and eternal life hereafter. It is the savour of death unto death to the wicked; it smells, as it were, of death to them; it tells them their hopes are unfounded; it shows their condemned and dead state in this life, and their eternal death in the life to come. The kingdom of God, is that reign, or government which God foretold he would set up, and give to his Son,—Daniel ii, 44. vii, 13, 14; and hence it is applied to the dispensation of the gospel. It is likewise applied to those who believe the gospel, and who become in a peculiar measure subject to God; he gives them laws and privileges, and they obtain righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The kingdom of heaven, frequently signifies the same as the kingdom of God; and is also often applied to that reign of God in the heart which makes a man fit for heaven: at other times, when an evident reference is made to the state of the blessed hereafter, it signifies the regions of eternal glory, the heavenly world, where God peculiarly manifests his presence and displays his glory.

With respect to MAN IN A STATE OF GRACE. He is described as born of God; a complete and entire change has been produced in him by the power and grace of God; he becomes possessed of new perceptions and dispositions, and makes a new use of all his faculties; he has new fears and hopes, joys and sorrows, love and hatred; new desires, and new employments. This change is described as having passed from death unto life; being delivered from a state of condemnation and spiritual death, and brought to a state of spiritual life and holiness. Quickened together with Christ. By nature the Christian was dead in sins, but he has received spiritual life through the resurrection of Christ, with whom he is said to be quickened, or made alive; because Christ was raised from the dead as the living head of his people; and their life was therefore considered as treasured up in him. He has a new heart, his dispositions and affections are changed and purified, and he has a new spirit, new light in the understanding, new purity in the imagination, a conscience which is tender and regulated by new principles. Yet there are, in him, two principles, like a house that has two inhabitants, or like two garments or characters, one of which is to be put off and laid aside that the other, which is of a different nature, may be put on. The old man, that corrupt principle which prevails in the heart before grace is given, and continues in some degree to exist through life, and inclines a man to evil; it is subtle, earthly minded, sensual, proud, devilish; and the new man, that new principle, which is spiritual, pure, humble, and holy, and which inclines a man to love God and Christ, and heavenly things. Thus he becomes a new creature, an entirely altered character, with a new judgment and new inclinations, words, and actions; with new hopes, connexions, and enjoyments. He also grows in grace, daily becomes more devoted to God; he obtains a larger portion of his spirit, and increases in the ex-

ercise of Christian tempers and holy dispositions; and in the knowledge of Christ, experiencing more of his power and love, and perceiving more and more how completely he is the source of all true happiness.

The scriptures enter into all the particulars of the life of the renewed man. His faith, which has already been described, enables him to overcome the world; he has a battle to fight with deeply-rooted worldly habits, principles, and connexions, but he breaks through all these difficulties, comes out, and is separate from the sinful customs and practices of the world. He is transformed by the renewing of his mind, delivered as it were into a new mould, made unlike the world, and like God.—He is crucified to the world, and the world to him. He thinks of the world as one that is crucified; to whom its prospects and honours are as nothing; and the world, on the other hand is crucified to him, and looks with indifference and contempt on every thing that distinguishes his profession and his hopes. He is dead unto sin, freed not only from the condemnation, but from the dominion and love of sin, through his union with Jesus Christ; but alive unto God, in an active state of mind, fervent in spirit, seeking to promote the interests and glory of God. He walks with God, lives in a course of practical and progressive obedience to God, boldly professing his love to him. God condescends to be his guide, his protector, his all in all. He thirsts for God, he desires to find his presence in his worship and ordinances, and in all the means of grace, with the same earnestness with which a thirsty man desires water. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness, he earnestly desires the attainment of holiness as the great end and object of his life, and longs to be free from all sin; thus he becomes more and more conformed to the image of Christ, or like his Saviour, in all his holy and heavenly tempers and dispositions. Yet in his flesh dwelleth no good thing; possessing a corrupt nature, the tendencies of which are to evil, he often finds reason to lament it in this language; and the only cure arises from the grace of Christ who liveth in him; by his spirit, and his word, influencing and regulating all, just as the soul in the body directs its movements, and guides and governs its actions, or as a pilot steers a ship. He works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, diligently and laboriously, and sensible of its vast importance, as fearful lest he should fail; strives to escape that misery which he knows he individually deserves; and to obtain that happiness which God has promised; and he is to do so, for it is God which worketh in him, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, because God, according to his own will and boundless goodness through the operation of his spirit, first inclines and then enables him, thus earnestly and anxiously to seek the salvation of his soul, as the one thing needful.

The Characters which have been described, are those whom *God has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.** He, to whom all his works were known from the beginning, appointed Christ Jesus as the head of all who should eventually be saved; and in him, he chose all those who should be by his grace brought to an acquaintance with himself. This choice had a regard to them individually, in consequence of his infinite knowledge of his own designs, and of the persons who should be the subjects of his grace. Hence believers come to Christ, being given to him, John vi, 37, 44; and he says of them, *they shall never perish*, for he that hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. He will preserve them from the power of their enemies, and enable them to persevere in his paths till they come to heaven; so that though they may "fall they shall rise again."

While the Christian continues in this life, he has to go through many changes and difficulties. Sometimes he walks in darkness, afflicted, tempted, and fearful, he goes on, but is uncertain whether he is in the right way; he cannot discern his path or his house; but this is not al-

* This expression is well explained in the 17th Article of the church of England, to which the reader is referred.

ways the case, for at other times he walks in the light; while the means of grace are continued, he diligently improves them, the word of God gives him light and encouragement, he diligently walks in the ways of holiness, and finds that they are ways of pleasantness and peace. He meets indeed with difficulties, but he takes up the cross, he does not go out of the right road to avoid it, nor does he neglect his duty because it is unpleasant, but however contrary it may be to his natural disposition, he quietly and steadily submits to the will of God, forsakes sin and practices holiness, though it exposes him to pain and reproach from the world. He denies himself, gives up his own inclinations, when contrary to the will of God, and even his lawful indulgences, for the good of others; he renounces the proud and self-sufficient notion of being his own master, and submits himself to the will of God and to his plan of salvation as revealed in the gospel, casting off all self-dependance and self-will. The attainments of the believer, both in knowledge and practice, are, in general, progressive. At first, he is a babe in Christ, young, feeble, and ignorant; he is weak in the faith, he knows but little of the doctrine of Christ, and of the benefits to be derived from him, and has little experimental acquaintance with his power, grace, and love; it is in general by degrees that he becomes strong in faith; the longer he lives, the more he experiences the truth of God's promises; his faith gradually increases; just as a child gradually grows up and becomes stronger, as it advances to manhood; thus his faith strengthens and his practice keeps pace with it, till at length he walks implicitly under the direction of God, believing that nothing is impossible with him. The believer is changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord; beholding in the glass of the gospel, the excellency of the divine glory as it is there manifested, he loves it, and imbibes more and more the holy principles which it displays; so that he increases in conformity to the will of God by the influence of the Holy Spirit; at length he departs to be with Christ; he dies, and enters into the immediate presence of his Saviour, with whom he lives forever in heaven.

With respect to God's JUSTIFYING US, OR ACCOUNTING US RIGHTEOUS THROUGH THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST. The Christain is said *to be made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.* He partakes of the benefit of his atonement for sin; so that as Christ was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, by his suffering on our account, so the believer in Christ is accounted righteous through his obedience and death. Whenever sin is charged on a sinner and proved against him, it is said to be *imputed to him.* Whenever a sufficient legal reason is given, why the sinner should not be condemned, *righteousness* is said to be imputed to him: he is then *justified.** His justification is

* Many, who in some degree, admit the doctrine of the atonement, hesitate about using these phrases, and similar expressions, though they frequently occur in the New Testament. Yet, if we are at all benefited by an atonement, we partake of advantages which we would not procure by our own virtue or exertions, but which are procured for us by another. In this case, the results of such an atonement are ours, and the atonement itself, is so far reckoned ours, or considered as made on our account, that we can plead it as a reason why we should enjoy the advantages arising from it. Hence we must consider an atonement as a *substitution*, and the results arising from it as *imputed* to our account. There may be some difference about the terms, but the idea will remain. We often see something of the kind in the daily occurrences of life. The following instance may illustrate the idea of imputation. A man in debt is summoned by his creditor to pay what he owes; but he has been negligent and profligate; his accounts are deranged, and he is unable to discharge his obligations. A kind friend interposes, with anxious attention he labors hard, he reduces confusion to order, puts the man's affairs in train again, and offers his own security to the creditor, who is satisfied with it, and the man goes forward under new obligations to attend to his business and duties for the future. Here the engagement of the debtor's friend is accounted to the debtor, as a reason why he should not be arrested.—And thus, in fact, the property of another, so far as this engagement is concerned, is *imputed* to him. If it be said, this is merely a commercial transaction, and has little to do with the moral difficulty of an innocent person suffering for the guilty; it may be observed, that cases often occur in which relief can be afforded to the undeserving and miserable, only by the worthy and virtuous, partaking of the effects of the guilt committed, and thus instances are actually afforded of real *substitution.* Suppose a depraved wretch, labouring

that which he can plead at the bar of condemnation. Viewing the freeness of the mercy shown to the believer in Jesus, he is said to be justified *by grace*. Titus iii, 7. Thus also the sinner, whose iniquities are forgiven, is represented as the *man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works*. Rom. iv. 6, 7. Viewing the medium through which this mercy is displayed, viz. the atonement of Christ, he is said to be *justified by his blood*. Rom. v, 9. Viewing the means by which he partakes of the benefits of Christ's atonement, he is said to be *justified by faith*. Rom. iii, 28. v, 1. Faith also is said to be *imputed for righteousness*, Rom. v, 9, 22, as it is by faith that we partake of the benefits procured and promised through the death of Christ. And the *free grace of God*, and *faith in the propitiation of Jesus Christ*, are represented as both combined in the justification of a believer in that striking view of the subject, Rom. iii, 24, 25, 26, where we see an admirable specimen of the apostles' mode of preaching Jesus, and free justification by faith in his atonement. And lastly, viewing the tendency and evidences of faith, and the effects invariably connected with justification, we are said to be *justified by works*.*

Any one who attentively considers these various expressions, will see, that whilst the religion of the Bible comprehends the purest morality, it is infinitely superior to a system of mere moral precepts. Its grand peculiarities are, that it describes man to be by nature in a state of alienation from God, sinful and under a curse; it proposes a remedy, and promises to sinners, who feel their wretched state, and who earnestly desire deliverance, that divine assistance which will renew them more and more. This religion has been briefly described, as "the heart of a sinner returning to his God under a divine influence, and through a mediator;" "through him we both (Jew and Gen-

under an infectious disease, has been cast into a dungeon; a man of benevolence obtains leave to visit and release him; he descends into the dungeon and risks his life in effecting his purpose. He then applies his talents, his time, and his property in endeavoring to reclaim this man, sunk not only in misfortune, but in vice. In all this, we see the deliverer has necessarily to bear some of the consequences of the poor man's iniquity. Much labor and exertion is indispensable for effecting his purpose. The life of Mr. Howard afforded many examples of this nature, and in cases of an inferior kind, we often see what in various ways illustrates this principle. In these instances, the virtues and general weight of character of such benevolent persons may procure many advantages for the unfortunate and guilty sufferers, who may thus meet with much kindness and attention, which they could not in justice claim. Those who thus assist others, are supposed to have ability to do so, without infringing on the duties which they individually owe to society, and had they not exerted themselves in such directions, they would still have claimed respect for the excellency of their characters in private stations.

It is not pretended that these, or any other analogies can explain completely the redemption which is by Jesus Christ.—That redemption is a grand fact, unlike any other with which we are acquainted, and infinitely superior to every thing of an earthly nature. The Lord and Saviour, by the peculiar constitution of his person, is able to perform what is beyond the power of any created being. His work therefore is peculiar and perfect, having nothing comparable to in creation. But these analogies which do not fully explain the principles of a subject of such magnitude and importance, as the justification of a sinner before God, may yet assist us in forming some conception of it.

Those who would wish to see many peculiarities of Christianity admirably illustrated, by common events in God's providence, would do well to consult Butler's Analogy, a book which has been peculiarly serviceable to men of thinking minds.

* This expression, though apparently opposite to the above remarks, is yet in exact agreement with them, when properly understood. Abraham's *faith* was *counted to him for righteousness* many years *before* Isaac was born. Gen. xv, 6. To this fact both Paul and James refer. Ro. iv, 23. Jas. ii, 23. But the latter of these apostles speaking of the active power of faith in producing works, refers to its effects in the case of Abraham, and says, "was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." His works which followed many years after the faith which justified him, could not therefore be the ground of his acceptance and justification before God, though they were the end to which his faith tended, the evidence of its reality and power, and proved that he was justified. Thus the *scripture was fulfilled*, the truth of the declaration was proved which had stated, before those works could be performed, *that he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*.

tile) have access by one spirit unto the Father."

This Chapter may also furnish some hints for self examination. It is evident that the Bible divides all mankind into two great classes, the righteous and the wicked, and describes only two states in which men shall be placed hereafter. Nothing therefore can be more important than to ascertain to which class we belong, to which place we are going. In comparison of this, all inquiries of a worldly nature are trivial and vain. Now here, the Bible, studied under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is the only source of genuine information by which we may discover our real characters, and be guided into the way of peace. O ! let us not be careless and indifferent in this great concern. May we never rest satisfied till we have reason to hope, that "we are turned from darkness to light—from the power of Satan to God, and have an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus."

CHAPTER VIII.

On Scripture Difficulties.

The scriptures are like the material heavens—they are, if such an expression may be used, the tabernacle in which the sun of righteousness dwells. When this glorious light appears in the sacred pages, it shines with pre-eminent brightness, eclipsing every other. There are, however, other lights borrowed from it, and revolving round it—the lights of the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and the church of God in all ages ; and these, in subserviency to the great luminary, assist in guiding our paths. The lights of heaven are always shining, though often hid from us. Our ignorance, our pride, and our prejudices, do, what God threatened to do to Egypt, Ezek. xxxii, 7, 8 ; they "cover the heavens and make the stars thereof dark ; they cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon does not give her light ; they make dark over us all the bright lights of heaven, and set darkness upon the land ;" and we love this darkness rather than the light, because our deeds are evil.

This is one great reason why we so little understand the Bible, and hence arises the necessity of looking continually for the help of the Holy Spirit, which blowing where it listeth, yet when given to those who ask, dispels every mist and cloud. This Holy Spirit removes those prejudices with which sin, self, the world, and Satan, have infected us. It enlightens our dark minds, humbles our proud hearts, discovers to us the beauty and perfection of scripture, and makes us willing, when our reason is satisfied that the Bible is true, to believe even what we cannot fully understand.

When an astronomer, and an ignorant person look at the heavens, with what different views they survey the same glorious objects. They both may admire the outward splendour, but one having long and patiently studied the heavenly bodies, and looking at them through a telescope, discovers a grandeur and magnificence, an harmony and utility, a beautiful and regular motion, which give him new and exalted ideas of his Creator's power and glory ; and he can apply his knowledge also to many valuable practical purposes.

In such different views do the real and nominal Christian look at the Bible. They both see the beauty of language, and the mere outward attractions ; but the real Christian, who daily studies his Bible, and brings its distant objects near by faith, finds in it such displays of the glory of God, such harmony, consistency, and beauty, and such plain and practical rules for his daily conduct, as fill him with wonder and delight. He may not be able to account for every thing he sees, but he discovers enough to show him the wisdom of God, and the way to heaven.

Some say, after all, I find many things hard to be understood and believed ; and is this wonderful ? Do you not meet with many things in your daily life which you cannot account for ? Whence come pain, sin, and death ? Why are plagues and earthquakes sent to sweep thousands from the earth ? You believe many natural things which you cannot account for ; why then should you not believe spiritu-

al things though you may not be able to account for them? Consider how glorious a being God is, and what a poor ignorant worm you are in comparison of him; and is it wonderful that you cannot comprehend the glory of God? Would it not rather be wonderful if you could? Faith and reason are different faculties, but each should be exercised in the study of the Bible. If we could at once perfectly understand and comprehend it; faith would not be exercised in receiving that which is above our reason, nor humility in submitting ourselves to the declarations of God's will. Many passages which may be difficult to *you*, are not at all difficult to those who may have more knowledge of their Bible and of their own hearts, of history, and of the world. Be ever ready to allow that your difficulties may proceed from your ignorance.* When you are learning a trade or business, and meet with any thing you cannot comprehend, you apply to those who know more of it, and are able to remove your difficulties—you should do the same here—ask some judicious and pious minister, or friend, to explain what you do not understand.

The particular customs of Eastern countries at the time when the events recorded took place, clear up many things which seem strange to us now. Thus, when our Lord says, "men do not put new wine into old bottles," we cannot understand it, till we are informed, that their bottles were made of skins or leather, and not of glass as ours are.† This also explains Ps. cxix, 83.

The manners and mental acquirements of mankind in remote antiquity, in the very birth and infancy of our species, were widely different from those of the present age. Bishop Watson has well illustrated this; he says, "the history of man is the history of the providence of God; who has adapted his government to the capacity of those, who in different ages were the subjects of it. The history of any one nation throughout all ages, and that of all nations in the same age, are but separate parts of one great plan. But who can comprehend the whole of this immense design? The shortness of life, the weakness of our faculties, the inadequacy of our means of information, conspire to make it impossible for us, worms of the earth! insects of an hour! completely to understand any one of its parts. No man, who well weighs the subject, ought to be surprised, that in the histories of ancient times many things should occur foreign to our manners, the propriety and necessity of which we cannot clearly comprehend.

"It appears incredible to many, that God Almighty should have had colloquial intercourse with our first parents; that he should have contracted a kind of friendship for the patriarchs, and entered into covenants with them; that he should have suspended the laws of nature in Egypt; should have been so apparently partial as to become the God and governor of one particular nation; and should have so far demeaned himself as to give to that people a burthensome ritual of worship, statutes and ordinances, many of which seemed beneath the dignity of his attention, unimportant and impolitic. I have conversed with many deists, and have always found that the strangeness of these things was the only reason for their disbelief of them; nothing similar has happened in their time; they will not, therefore, admit that these events have taken place at any time. As well might a child, when arrived at a state of manhood, contend that he had never either stood in need or experienced the fostering care of a mother's kindness, the wearisome attention of his nurse, or the instruction and discipline of his school-master. The Supreme Being selected one family from an idolatrous world; nursed it up, by various acts of his providence, into a great nation; communicated to that nation a knowledge of his holiness, justice, mercy, power, and wisdom; disseminated them at various times through every part of the earth, that they might be a "leaven to leaven the whole lump," that they might assure all other nations of the existence of one

* See Butler's Analogy of Revealed Religion, and Pascal's Thoughts.

†See Burder's Oriental Customs, 2 vol.—Harmer's Observations on Scripture, 4 vol.—Fleury's Manners of the Israelites, 1 vol.

supreme God, the creator and preserver of the world, the only proper object of adoration. With what reason can we expect, that what was done to one nation, not out of any partiality to them, but for the general good, should be done to all? that the mode of instruction, which was suited to the infancy of the world, should be extended to the maturity of its manhood, or to the imbecility of its old age? I own, that when I consider how nearly man, in a savage state, approaches to the brute creation, as to intellectual excellence; and when I contemplate his miserable attainments as to the knowledge of God, in a civilized state, when he has had no divine instruction on the subject, or when that instruction has been forgotten, (for all men have known something of God from tradition,) I cannot but admire the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, in having let himself down to our apprehensions, in having given to mankind in the earliest ages, sensible and extraordinary proofs of his existence and attributes; in having made the Jewish and Christian dispensations mediums to convey to all men, through all ages, that knowledge concerning himself, which he had vouchsafed to give immediately to the first. I own that it is strange, very strange, that he should have made an immediate manifestation of himself in the first ages of the world; but what is there that is not strange? It is strange that you and I are here—that there is water, and earth, and air, and fire —that there is a sun, and moon, and stars —that there is generation, corruption, and reproduction. I can account ultimately for none of these things without recurring to him who made every thing. I also am his workmanship, and look up to him with hope of preservation through all eternity. I adore him for his word as well as for his work! his work I cannot comprehend, but his word hath assured me of all that I am concerned to know —that he hath prepared everlasting happiness for those who love and obey him."

The sixty-six separate books of the Bible perfectly agree in every point of importance. The few trifling differences which have been brought forward may easily be reconciled by consulting the comments of wise and good men. *Consider*—when several writers mention the same facts, each relates only the circumstances which *he* was acquainted with.—Printing has only been invented between 300 and 400 years; and before that time books could only be multiplied by writing.—The Hebrews and Greeks often expressed their numbers by letters, several of which are so much alike that a hasty copier might easily mistake—yet not one doctrine or duty is rendered obscure by any of these differences. How absurdly do they act who are continually stumbling at the difficulties of the Bible, whilst they pass by and disregard those plain truths which would make them wise unto salvation. The way of eternal salvation is plain and clear.

The Bible was not designed to clear up every difficulty. Luther justly observes, "there are three lights—the light of nature, the light of grace and of glory. The light of nature cannot explain why a good man should suffer, and a bad man flourish; but the light of grace solves the difficulty, by teaching us that there is a future life, in which the wicked will be punished, and the righteous rewarded. Then the light of grace does not inform us, why God should punish an ungodly man, who cannot, by any powers of his own, amend his disposition. Nay, I will own, that both the light of nature and of grace, incline us to excuse the poor wretched man, and to think hardly of God, as unjust in his judgments, especially as he gives a crown to another who by nature is quite as ungodly, and perhaps more so. But, remember that the light of glory teaches us a different thing; namely, that the ways of God, which are incomprehensible at present, will, at the last day, appear most manifestly to be strictly just and holy in the highest degree." It is a great thing to know where all human reasoning and research ought to stop.

Difficulties have also their use. God thus tries our hearts, giving light enough to guide the meek in his ways, and leave the ungodly inexcusable, and yet letting darkness enough remain to prove the faith of the upright in heart, and to be a stumbling-block to the wicked.—"Those

passages," says Boyle, "that are so obscure to us as to teach us nothing else, may at least teach us humility." And farther, in consequence of these difficulties, the word of God has been more studied, and is on the whole better understood, than it otherwise would have been.

Let not the difficulties in scripture induce you to prefer reading other books, which may appear more plain and instructive. They are not really so. It is well observed by Boyle, "as the moon, for all those darker parts we call spots, gives a much greater light than the stars that seem all bright and luminous, so will the scriptures, for all its obscure passages, afford the Christian and divine more light than the brightest human writings." Remember too, that whilst some of the disciples were offended by what they called "a hard saying which none could hear," and forsook Christ on that account, the apostles silenced every objection with this—"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Let this great truth silence your objections, and lead you to imitate their example.

But, depend upon it, the great reason why men do not understand their Bible, is because their hearts are unrenewed by divine grace. How can an earthly, sensual, worldly-minded man, enter into the meaning of the pure, holy, and heavenly truths of the gospel? Alas! to him they are not a savour of life unto life, but a savour of death unto death. While there was darkness in Egypt there was light in the dwellings of Israel; and again, the same cloud which conveyed light to the Israelites was dark to the Egyptians. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." (2 Cor. iv, 3.) I must repeat again, then—never think of understanding the Bible without the help of the Holy Spirit; and will not God give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Luke, xi, 13.

Take heed also that you be not among those "unlearned and unstable, who wrest the things hard to be understood to their own destruction."

CHAPTER IX.

Summary of Divine Truth.

Some say, in the midst of so much matter we are at a loss to know what is most important to be attended to; we can never remember all that is said. I answer it is one peculiar excellence of the Bible, and shows how exactly adapted it is to the wants of mankind in general, that it perpetually conveys, I had almost said, the whole system of divine truth necessary to be known for our salvation, in one or two short sentences. I have selected the following as specimens:

Our Lord's summary of *doctrine*, when Nicodemus came to consult him about the nature of his religion, is equally striking and important. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii, 3, 5, 16.

And again, observe his summary of *duties*. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. xxii, 37, 39.) —All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Mattt. vii, 12.

I will add two other summaries from St. Paul's epistles.

"The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—Titus ii, 11—14.

Again—"God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace are ye saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" Ephes. ii, 4—10.

On a larger scale we have a complete and full statement of divine truth regularly arranged in St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. Beware, however, of trying to make the word of God bend to the systems of men, or to any preconceived notions in your own mind. Take it as you find it. Whatever may be fairly inferred from it, receive with readiness. A great outline of divine truth is there distinctly marked out. Avoid all atempts to alter it. "I find in the Bible," says Cecil, "a grand peculiarity, that seems to say to all who attempt to systematise it, I am not of your kind—I am untractable in your hands—I stand alone. The great and wise shall never exhaust my treasure: by figures and parables I will come down to the feelings and understandings of the ignorant. Leave me as I am, but study me incessantly."*

CHAPTER X.

Reasons why reading the Scriptures is frequently attended with little Advantage.

The practice of reading the Bible habitually, is truly excellent and of vast importance, and usually it is highly advantageous, as has already been shown. But if the benefit arising from the study of the Scriptures be so great, whence is it, that many read them from year to year without seeming to derive any profit from them? They are probably outwardly moral, but they manifest little or no real improvement of character. The same unholy tempers, the same worldly dispositions prevail in a great measure in them, as in those who entirely neglect this study. They make no progress in religion, they do not "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." There must be some reasons why so little advantage is derived from so important a practice as reading the Bible.—Among these, we may mention the various ways in which the Bible may be read *unprofitably*, from not discerning or not feeling the proper manner and end for which we ought to read it.—For instance:

Some set themselves a certain quantity to read every day, perhaps three or four chapters or more, and they read these regularly, whether what they read be history, doctrine, or practice. But they do not consider with attention the nature and design of the portions which they read. The exercise is altogether a matter of form. They do it from mere habit, or from a self-righteous spirit. They do not meditate upon what they read; they do not pray that they may understand and feel its true force, and that they may "receive the truth in the love of it," and in the exercise of proper dispositions of heart. Hence they are but little influenced by the Bible, and neither find happiness nor profit in studying it. They seek not the aid of God's Holy Spirit, they feel not the consequence of the truths which they read to the health of their souls. They are not sensible that these truths are urged on them by the powerful sanctions of ETERNITY: nor do they see their intimate connexion with their salvation: and how then can they expect that what they read will be brought home to their hearts?

Some, on the other hand, read the Bible quite irregularly; and now and then, for a few days, they seem to attend to it in good earnest; but finding, perhaps,

* See Cecil's Remains, a book full of the most striking and useful observations on men and religion.

some difficulties, and not at once experiencing all the advantages which they expected, they give it up, and neglect it entirely for weeks together; and thus, if any useful impressions have been made, they are soon worn off and lost.

Some read the Bible, not as a serious and important duty, but carelessly, perhaps from mere curiosity, or from the shame of being ignorant, &c. They take the book up, read it, lay it down, and think no more about it. The word does not abide in their heart, and therefore it produces no fruit.

Others read with strong bias and prejudice upon their minds. They love the world; they love the praise of men. They have joined a particular party from which they take their sentiments, and they will not separate themselves from it. They think, that if they embraced certain doctrines or precepts they might be exposed to much reproach and opposition, and their temporal interest or reputation might suffer. They are unwilling to give up sentiments they once professed, and are not endued with sufficient humility to discover, or probably to suspect the reason. The Pharisees seem to have read the Scriptures with this strong bias upon their minds.—They regarded traditions more than the word of God; they were covetous, vain, and prejudiced. Hence, though they pretended to pay such extraordinary attention to the minutest parts of the law, and to be so very strict respecting its letter, they were so ignorant of its general nature, and had seen so little of its true excellence, that they did not know the Lord of glory, and despised and rejected the Saviour of the world.

Some confine their reading to particular books; they will read over and over again the Psalms and Proverbs, the gospels and some historical books, and will entirely disregard all the rest; or, on the other hand, they will study the doctrinal parts, to the exclusion of those which are more practical. By this means their minds get a particular bent; they acquire partial ideas of divine truth, and never attain enlarged and comprehensive views of God's dispensations.

Others give almost the whole of their attention to mere critical niceties, to the outside and the letter of Scripture, to difficult texts, to expositions, and to various translations and versions, &c. They will search through one commentary or lexicon after another, to find the opinions of various writers, on abtruse and obscure points. They can tell you all that different authors say upon such texts, and there they stop. Far would the writer be from finding fault with the labors of the learned, to whom we are so much indebted, or from condemning those who, having leisure, thus enter minutely into the critical meaning, whilst they do not neglect the practical application, of the truth. But is not such a mode of study "frequently attended with pride, ostentation, and self-love, lurking under the plausible pretence of searching the Scriptures? Such a man will search out all manner of intricacies in reading the Scriptures, rather than nourish his heart with those plain and practical doctrines which are apparent to every one's view."* Is there not also danger lest we should imagine such studies are the whole of religion? It is so easy to deceive ourselves, and to think that we must be religious, when our whole mind is engaged upon religious subjects. But in this case we need peculiar caution. The study of the Bible is mainly advantageous, when we apply the truth to ourselves, when it influences our hearts, and when that influence is so manifested in our lives, that we ourselves become living epistles, "seen and read of all men." How absurd would that person's conduct be, who spent all his time in considering the appearance of his food, or the utensil which contained it, whilst he was actually starving for want of nourishment!

If there be so many unprofitable modes of study, how important it is to attend to those directions which God himself has given us respecting this duty. To point *them* out, is the subject of the following chapter.

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* See "Plain directions for reading the Scriptures," p. 19.

CHAPTER XI.

Practical Rules for Daily Study.

The study of the Scriptures being a great and important duty, how shall we perform it to most advantage? What is necessary in order to obtain a right knowledge of divine truth? The Bible itself answers our inquiries, and furnishes us with the best rules for understanding and being edified by its contents.

The most needful thing is, to gain the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Without the help of this divine Teacher all means will be ineffectual, for the Spirit alone can "guide us unto all truth." Hence the necessity of that prayer, "Lord, open thou mine eyes that I may see wondrous things out of thy law." "There is," says Owen, "a sacred light in the word, but there is a covering, a veil on the eyes of men, so that they cannot behold it aright. Now the removal of this veil is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit."

With earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit, and in entire dependence upon its help, there are two things chiefly necessary to be attended to, in the study of the Bible. One is, *to get a right understanding of divine truth.* For this purpose, a regular plan of study, diligent perseverance in that plan, and using the best human helps we can obtain, are things of much importance. And farther, an acquaintance with the original languages, and with the history of all countries, and of the world in general, will also be found advantageous. It must not, however, be concealed, that great knowledge of the Bible may be gained, by those who make no progress in the religion of the heart. St. Paul supposes a case, where a man may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and yet be nothing, not having charity or love. Another, then, and very important point is, to *make the truths we know, the rule by which our daily conduct is governed.* Our Lord says, "If any man will *do* his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." And Solomon tells us "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is evident, therefore, that the gaining of that religious knowledge which will make us wise unto salvation, very much depends on the disposition with which we are engaged in this study. "The state of the heart has the chief influence in the search after truth: humility, contrition, simplicity, sanctity—these are the handmaids of the understanding in the investigation of religion." If the Bible is taken up with a careless, irreverent spirit, in the same way that you would take up any common book, little profit can reasonably be expected. That the dispositions of the heart are of vast importance, is very evident from the parable of the sower. The seed sown was all of equal goodness, all scattered by the same hand, and at the same time; the great difference was in the state of the ground on which it was sown. It is only the honest and good heart that brings fruit to perfection.

Divine truth is intended to do far more than furnish our minds with right views. It is, through the grace of God, the means of sanctifying our hearts, and when brought home to the conscience by the Spirit, and apprehended by faith, it never fails to produce this effect. Yet it must be admitted, that valuable as good dispositions really are, a man who neglects to acquire the information needful for enabling him to direct and apply them, may make strange and dangerous mistakes. Many have had a zeal without knowledge, which has done much harm both to themselves and others. Both knowledge and obedience, then, are needful, as they mutually assist and forward each other. It is said, "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." I propose now to give you some practical rules, which, I am persuaded if attended to, you will find advantageous, in helping you rightly to study your Bible. The first six relate to the *state of mind* with which the reader should engage in this duty, and the dispositions and Christian graces which he will find it advantageous to exercise in the performance of it. The next eight

relate more immediately to the *mode of study*, and to particulars to be attended to in the book itself.*

I. Rules relating to the State of the Reader's Mind.

1. *Read the Bible in the spirit of continual prayer:*—prayer before you begin, prayer mixed with your reading, and prayer when you have done. Say, "Lord, help me to remember this; to forsake this or that sin; to practise this or that duty." The disciples, when our Lord tells them how often they are to forgive an offending brother, instantly begin to pray, "Lord, increase our faith." This is one of the most important rules, and is indispensably necessary. All the rest will naturally follow, if you do but constantly attend to this; nor do I believe any one, who thus prays, will be left under the final prevalence of any ruinous error, or in ignorance of any fundamental truth. Be thoroughly persuaded that you cannot savingly understand the Bible, or experience the gospel to be the power of God, without divine teaching. (See 1 Cor. ii, 10 and 14.) This is one reason why so many great and learned men utterly mistake the true meaning of the Bible. David prayed for help in reading the Scriptures, (see Ps. cxix, 18.) and if you earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth, you may depend upon receiving it; for God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him, and this Spirit alone can give us an experimental knowledge of spiritual things. Farther, turn passages of Scripture into prayer: thus when James says, "humble yourselves in the sight of God," pray in this way, God grant that I may be humbled for my many and great sins. Look up to God who can alone give you this spirit of prayer, and who will make the Bible itself a means of exciting devotional feelings. "Who is there, who almost at any time, reading the Scriptures with reverence to God, and subjection of conscience to him, has not had some particular matter of prayer or praise, effectually suggested to him. And Christians would find no small advantage, by constantly turning what they read into prayer or praise; for hereby the instructions of the word would be more confirmed in their minds, and their hearts would be more engaged in the practice of them."

2. *Mix faith with all you read.*—The gospel is as food: faith receives, eats and digests it, and thus it becomes nourishing. One who mixes faith with what he reads, accepts the mercy offered in God's word, and applies it to himself with suitable affection: that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," brings the great truths of Scripture as perceptibly to the faculties of our souls, as that which we see with our eyes, and touch with our hands, is made palpable and obvious to the senses of our bodies. Remember, the word preached by Moses did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Heb. iv, 2. Let your faith be a lively, active faith, inducing you not only to believe that all you read is true, but earnestly to seek an interest in the promises, to escape the threatenings, and to obey the commands, however difficult they may seem. In reading the Bible, you should not only desire, but expect, great spiritual benefit—you should not only pray for, but depend upon, the teaching of the Holy Spirit. You may confidently expect what God has promised, as far as is needful for your salvation.

3. *Read the Bible with great reverence, and with a humble and teachable mind.* The Thessalonians received the gospel, not as the word of men, but as it

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* It will be a satisfaction to some of my readers perhaps to see most of these rules in the following extract from Archbishop Parker, one of the Reformers.

"Only search with a humble spirit, ask in continual prayer, seek with purity of life, knock with perpetual perseverance, and cry to the good Spirit of Christ, the Comforter, and surely to every such asker it shall be given, such searchers must needs find, to them it will be opened. Christ himself will open the sense of Scripture, not to the proud or wise of the world, but to the lowly and contrite in heart, for he hath the key of David who opens and no man shuts, and who shuts and no man opens."

is, in truth, the word of God; and they derived benefit accordingly; for it is added, it did also work effectually in them that believed. 1 Thess. ii, 13. O! if we had but right views of God's glorious majesty, and his amazing condescension in revealing himself unto us in the Bible, with what reverence of spirit, and with what self-abasement should we study this book. It would never be taken up, in a light, trifling spirit, as a matter of indifference; but we should read it, as the most serious duty in which we could be engaged; submitting ourselves entirely to divine instruction. The Psalmist says, "my heart standeth in awe of thy word." Ps. cxix, 161. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." Ps. xxv. We are to receive the ingrafted word with meekness. Jas. i, 21. If you come to your Bible with a disposition to cavil and find fault, or with notions of your own, formed before hand, you are not likely to get much advantage by reading it: but if you come, sensible of your ignorance, with a readiness to receive the impressions of divine truth, and with a child-like dependence upon God, you shall not come in vain. Remember, Christ says, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Again, a tender and broken spirit is an admirable preparative for this study, and therefore it is said, "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isa. lxvi, 2. "To day, if ye will hear his voice, *harden* not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." The religion of the Scriptures is of a humble, meek, forbearing character.

4. *Read the Bible with patient meditation, and with self-application and self-examination.* We ought to dwell upon the passage we read, and patiently to turn it over in our minds, especially if it immediately relates to the doctrine and practice of the gospel, or to the experience of believers. We should thus endeavour to enter into its spirit, to find out what practical good we can get by it, and to impress it deeply upon our consciences, remembering the apostle's admonition, "that we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Heb. ii, 4. You may say, perhaps, you have not time for this; but remember what David, who had a far busier life than most of us, says, "O how I love thy law: it is my meditation *all the day*." Ps. cxix, 97.—Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word. Ps. cxix, 148. Thus you might redeem time from sleep, or even in your business, might be meditating upon God's word. Endeavour to enter into the full meaning of that expression, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Col. iii, 16. We are to be "MINDFUL of the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of the apostles of the Lord." 2 Peter iii, 2. Let us dwell on particular passages till they have in some measure done their office; that is, till some act of piety be excited; till we either get some new arguments against sin, some new encouragements to duty, some spiritual strength and advantage, some increase of knowledge, or some act of prayer or praise. "Every one," says an excellent practical writer, "should apply Scripture to himself, as if it was written for him only." Again, turn passages of Scripture into questions for self-examination. Thus, when Peter says, "grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ," ask yourself, do I grow in grace and in this knowledge of Christ? Your Bible will furnish you with the best hints for going through this very important duty. Your progress in this mode of study may seem slow, but you will thereby gain far more real information and knowledge, than by a hasty perusal; and you surely do not read as a matter of form, or merely to be able to say you have read so much. Many persons have found it useful to choose a verse or more out of the chapter they read in the morning, for meditation through the day.

5. *Read the Bible with simplicity of mind, desiring to be instructed in the truth of God, and with a single eye to the salvation of your soul:* with that honest and good heart, which, hearing the word of God, keeps it and brings forth fruit in

patience. "As a friend declares his wishes by letter to a friend, who ascertains and executes those wishes without any laboured interpretations, so, and with just such plainness does the Almighty declare his will to us in his word, and so did the apostles convey their injunctions to the primitive Christians, by which the latter regulated their conduct, contented with the simple and obvious meaning, and unsolicitous about the learned and prolix expositions of commentators."* The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. Ps. xix, 7. It giveth understanding to the simple. Ps. cxix, 130. We are directed "new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby." The new-born babe will be satisfied with nothing but its mother's milk, and this passage shows, that we should thus earnestly desire and relish the pure unadulterated truths of the Bible. Lord Bacon beautifully says, "as those wines which flow from the first treading of the grape are sweeter and better than those forced out by the press, which gives the roughness of the husk and the stone: so are those doctrines best and wholsomest which flow from a gentle crush of the scripture, and are not wrung into controversies and common place."

6. *Read the Bible with a heart devoted to God.* Have a fixed determination to give up every thing the Bible condemns, and to do the whole will of God. Read the Scriptures practically. Remember what David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." Keep in mind our Lord's direction and depend upon his promise, "if any man do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Renounce, then, your own will and affections, and devote yourself simply to the will and service of your Maker. Determine, in a better strength than your own, to have respect unto *all* God's commandments; and this will remove a thousand difficulties in understanding and embracing the truth. The great doctrines of the Bible, the guilt and corruption of man, free justification by faith, and the need of the Holy Spirit, will be readily believed and embraced by one who has duly attended to this rule.—St. James says, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."—"In studying the word of God, digest it under these two heads, either as removing obstructions which keep God and thee asunder, or as supplying some uniting power to bring God and thee together." Augustine says, "in the Scriptures our eyes see with more or less clearness, accordingly as we die more or less to this present world; and on the contrary, in proportion as we live to this world, we do not discern spiritual things."* It it well said also, in the first of the Church Homilies, "In reading God's word, he most profits, not always, that is most ready in turning the book, but he that is most turned into it, most inspired with the Holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and changed into the thing which he reads. He that is daily less and less proud, less wrathful, less covetous, and less desirous of worldly and vain pleasures.—He that, daily forsaking his old and vicious life, increases in virtue more and more."

II. Rules relating to the mode of Study.

7. *Read the Bible habitually, and, if possible, regularly, at stated periods.*—Read it according to your opportunities, with diligence and perseverance. The Bereans are commended for searching the Scriptures *daily*, Acts xvii, 11. The direction given to Joshua was to meditate therein day and night. Joshua, i, 8. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Hosea vi, 3. Let me entreat you, if you can, to make

* See Frank's Guide to the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures, containing excellent rules for that purpose.

* I use, says Boyle, the Scriptures not as an arsenal to be resorted to only for arms and weapons to defend a party or defeat its enemies, but as a matchless temple where I delight to be, to contemplate the beauty, the symmetry, and the magnificence of the structure, and increase my awe to the Being there preached and adored.

it a rule; to read some portion, though it be only one verse, every day. Most of you might read much more; a portion in the morning, from the new testament, and a portion in the evening, from the old. Or you might reverse this order. The Bible also, always affords something new, something we had not seen before. Do not think you have gained every thing by *once* reading a book; you may read it again and again with pleasure and advantage. Self-denial will be required to accomplish this, and you will have many temptations to neglect it; but persevere, and you will be abundantly rewarded. Remember, the welfare of your soul is at stake. Much more knowledge and edification will be gained by this constant, conscientious, and regular method of reading the Bible, than by reading it occasionally, in a hasty, uncertain manner, or in detached parts, as your fancy may suggest at the moment. Bernard says, "the reading accidentally, or as occasion offers, cannot edify; it only serves to make the mind volatile and inconstant. What we read transiently, is easily forgotten."

8. *Read one book through before you begin another, and read the whole Bible through.* Thus, if you are reading in Matthew in the morning, finish that gospel before you begin Mark; and if you are reading Genesis in the evening, go through with it, before you begin Exodus. You will thus see the connexion between one part and another. Though you will properly give those parts most of your time and attention, which are most practical, such as the Psalms, Proverbs, and the New Testament; yet read the whole of the Bible. David says, "then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments." Ps. cxix, 6. One part throws light upon another, and you will thus obtain an enlarged view of divine truth. There is the Bible milk for babes, and strong meat for those of a full and mature age. It is desirable to begin with the plainest and easiest books first, but I know not a better plan than regularly reading both testaments through at the same time. They both begin with historical books—then follow doctrinal and practical books—and both conclude with prophecies, which are evidently the most difficult parts. Both testaments not only throw light upon each other, but like two flames, when joined together, their united light shines with greater splendour and glory, than that of either does separately. A proper distinction, however, may be made in the mode of reading, according to the different ends designed by your study. For *general reading*, the mode just mentioned may be best, but for *devotional reading*, the following plan has been found profitable:—Not to read a great deal, or the whole bible in its course, but some select lessons from its most useful parts, perhaps 10 or 12 verses, considering them merely in a devotional and practical view—taking such instruction as readily presents itself, repeating it to the conscience, and charging the heart religiously to observe it and act upon it—looking up for the teaching of the spirit; and lastly, praying over the substance, with the Bible open before you. You will see, that I here mean that reading which forms a part of your *devotions*, at your stated times of retirement for secret worship.*

9. *Compare one part of Scripture with another.* We are directed to "compare spiritual things with spiritual." God, in compassion to our ignorance and want of a teachable disposition, gives precept upon precept and line upon line; here a little and there a little. What is obscure in one place, is made plain and easy in another. Hence, what some have complained of as being a repetition, is a great advantage to the patient and diligent reader of the Bible. Attention to this rule will lead you to see the harmony and consistency of Scripture. You will often be equally surprised and delighted with the fulness of a text, and with striking coincidences not before noticed; you will also find this a great help for fixing the Scriptures in your memory.†

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* See Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion, one of the best practical books I know.

† The following text is given with the parallel passages as a specimen of the way in which scripture may be that opened—it might have been much extended.

10. *Have respect to the analogy of faith, or the general plan of revealed truth, in interpreting Scripture.* It has been supposed, St. Paul alludes to this in Rom. xii, 6. when giving directions to him that prophesied, that is, preached and interpreted Scripture in the church, he says, "*If any man prophecy, let him prophecy according to the proportion of faith;*" but however this may be, it is an important rule to have a regard to the general tendency of Scripture, and not to interpret any obscure text, so as to make it contradict a plain one. For instance, those texts which speak of God as having bodily members, must not be understood literally, but as intended to help our conceptions of those powers and perfections which are a part of his spiritual excellencies; for it is elsewhere said, "God is a Spirit."*—Those texts which tell us that, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, and that we are justified freely by the grace of God, must not be understood as authorising sin, which would contradict the whole tendency of Scripture, but as condemning self-righteousness, magnifying the love of God, and showing the way of acceptance with him. And those texts which say, without holiness no man shall see the Lord; fear God

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Gen. iii, 15. I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The text may be divided into six parts:

1st, *The seed of the woman.* Farther prophecies, Gen. xxii, 18. Ps. cxxxii, 11. Isa. vii, 14. Jer. xxxi, 22. Mich. v, 3, 4. described. Gal. iii. 16. The fulfillment, Matt. i, 18, 23, Luke i, 31—35. The reason and benefit, Gal. iv, 4, 5. The servants of Christ are members of that body of which Christ is the head, and are therefore included in this seed, Isa. lii, 10. Gal. iii, 29. Mat. xiii, 38. Rom. ix, 8.

2d. *The seed of the serpent* are wicked men in all ages, Matt. iii, 7: xii, 34: xxiii, 33. John viii, 44. Acts xiii, 10. 1 John iii, 10. The serpent was merely an instrument of Satan, John viii, 44. 2 Cor. xi, 3, 14. 1 John iii, 8. Rev. xii, 9. xx, 2.

3d. *The enmity between the two,* Prov. xxix, 27. Acts xiii, 10. Gal. iv, 29. James iv, 4. 1 Pet. v, viii. Luke xvi, 13. 1 John iii, 13. 1 Thes. ii, 14, 15. Heb. x, 33, 34. Rev, xii, 17.

4th. *The bruising the head of Satan,* Ps. xci, 13. Rom. xvi, 20. Luke x, 18, x, 20. Col. ii, 15. 1 John ii, 13; iii, 8. The complete accomplishment of the prophecy, Rev. xx, 1—3, 10.

5th. *The bruising of the heel of Christ* and his church, Isa. liii, 5, 10, 12. Dan. ix, 26. Matt. iv. 1—10. Luke xxii, 39—44, 53. John xi, 30. Heb. v, 7. Rev. ii, 10. xii, 9—13. xx, 7, 8. The reason why Christ thus suffered from Satan, Heb, ii, 17, 18. iv, 15.

6th. *The sovereignty of God* I will put, Ps. cxxxv, 6. 1 Cor. xv. 15, 24, 25. Ps. viii, 6. Heb. ii, 8.

Though a good knowledge of your Bible will afford you some help in comparing one part with another, yet, in order to obtain this advantage in any considerable degree, you must have a Concordance, that is, an index of words, and a Bible with marginal references. The Rev. Thos. Scott has carried this mode of illustrating scripture to the greatest extent in his Family Bible. Cruden's Concordance is the best, but Butterworth's is more portable and very useful. Brown's is on a smaller scale, and is therefore much the cheapest, and will be of use to those to whom the others would be too expensive; there is also a useful index of various sizes to bind with different Bibles, and Crutwell's Concordance of Parallels will furnish valuable assistance. It does not however appear to the writer, that any work has yet carried this mode of interpreting scripture to the full extent, or done it in that simple way in which it might be accomplished. There is an outline or plan of divine truth in the Bible. This may be ranged under different heads, as Gastrell has shown in his Christian Institutes, and Warden still more fully (though many important heads are omitted even by him) in his system of revealed Religion. Each head might be numbered, and all the text relating to that head or subject, ranged under it, merely mentioning the book, chapter and verse, and in the margin of each of those texts in the Bible, the number of the head should also be inserted. Thus the reader might see on every text, the whole of what related to that subject throughout the Bible, without the multiplication of texts in the margin, and without the omission of many material texts, as is unavoidably the case at present. There would still be many historical passages, particularities of expression, and incidental beauties, which this mode alone would not embrace, and therefore, in addition to what has been suggested, there should be many of the references which are in our present Bibles. The writer gives this hint (for which he is indebted to a valued friend) in the hope that some one of sufficient leisure may carry it into effect.

* Fettiplace, an old writer, says, "When I find any bodily parts appropriated to the divine nature, I then see, God graciously condescends to the weakness of my frail and infirm nature, and bless his holy name that he vouchsafes to reveal himself, not as he is, but as I am—his eye is his wisdom—his right hand, his power—his sitting, his immutability—his standing, his fortitude—his anger, his justice in punishing—his repentance, his mercy in pardoning—his hatred of sin, his holiness—his grieving for sinners, his loving kindness—his long suffering, his goodness."

and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; are not to be understood as authorising the notion of salvation by works, but as showing the character and happiness of the converted sinner, who is created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Holiness is a part of his salvation and not the procuring cause of it. The mirror of divine truth has, as it were, different sides. One side is needful for one character, and another for another.—Is a man turning the grace of God into laciviousness? to him the doctrine of the absolute need of sanctification by the Spirit of God must be exhibited;—is another man trusting in himself that he is righteous, and depending upon his own works for salvation? to him the spirituality of God's holy law and the doctrine of free justification by Christ alone, without the deeds of the law, must be held up, and he must be warned that Christ shall profit him nothing, while he seeks to be justified by the law. We must not fancy because one text at first sight appears to contradict another, that therefore it does so. "Let us not so much as suppose that the Scripture can differ from itself, but humbly wait upon God till we can better reconcile one text with another: we shall find that in so doing, Gospel truths will open themselves to our mind more and more, and we shall come by degrees to that unity of faith and knowledge spoken of Ephes. iv, 15." This rule will also prevent you from considering the sentiments of the wicked a part of God's precepts. Thus we meet with this maxim, 1 Cor. xv, 32. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," which is quoted from Isaiah xxii, 13, and is intended to express the feeling of a sensual and wicked man, and not the mind of the Holy Spirit. Nor are all the actions of good men therefore good. You will find that all have fallen into some sin or other, and several into great and grievous sins: these are recorded, not for our imitation, but to make us watchful and careful to avoid them—and also to keep us from despairing of God's mercy on account of our own falls.

11. *Use such human help as God has placed within your reach, when you meet with any thing you do not understand.* The eunuch willingly received instruction from Philip, and thus was guided to the knowledge of what he did not before understand. Acts viii. In cases of difficulty, you will find it advantageous to consult your minister, or a pious friend; "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts." Mal. ii, 7. Hence, one great means of attaining to a knowledge of the Scripture, is to be constant in our attendance upon the public and faithful preaching of the ministers of the Gospel. In this way, we shall by degrees, obtain an extensive acquaintance with the truths of God. All that we hear, must, however, be brought to the test of Scripture. Acts xvii, 11. It is useful also, to refer to commentators or expositors of Scripture, not with a servile dependence upon them, but as often furnishing valuable assistance. It has pleased God in almost every age of the Church, to raise up not only those who *preached* the gospel, but also those who have given their views of divine truth in *writing*. The first account we have of human explanation of the Scriptures, seems to be that given of Ezra and his companions.—"They gave the sense and caused the people to understand the reading." Nehemiah viii, 8. Many who have attempted to explain Scripture, have, indeed, egregiously failed, and "darkened counsel by words without knowledge," yet the labors of others are of great and excellent use. Dr. Owen justly observes upon them, "they are far from having discovered the depths of this vein of wisdom, nor will the best of our endeavours prescribe limits to our successors, yet they are singular helps to the right understanding of Scripture, and it is easy to discern by the diversity of their gifts, that the Holy Spirit has divided to them as he pleased.*

*Persons who read Commentaries have generally their favourite authors, and the writer is far from wishing to dictate to others. Cecil says, "if we must have Commentators, as we certainly must, Poole is incomparable, and I had almost said, abundant of himself." The following are those from which the writer has derived the most edification: Scott's Notes to

The same Spirit renders them useful according to the counsel of his own will. Some readers are prone in the use of them, to lean to their own understandings, and wander after the imagination of their minds; and others, the Spirit leaves *in the shell of the text*, to exercise their skill about mere words, without leading them into the spiritual sense of the words, which is its life and power. In some he blesses them to the full and proper end."*

12. *Endeavour to ascertain the literal or first sense of a passage before you look for any other.* This, indeed, is the foundation on which every other sense should rest, and it will, when known, exceedingly assist you, in obtaining a clear, full, and useful view, of any spiritual meaning, or practical improvement which the passage may afford or impart. Any thing may be made of the Bible, if this rule be entirely neglected. Search then first for the literal sense, as you would in the writings of any human author, and when it is plain and valuable, prefer it as the true meaning, instead of interpreting the passage spiritually or figuratively. In order to discover this sense, consider to what persons the inspired penman was writing; in what circumstances they were placed; the time when he wrote; the design of his instructions; and the connection of the particular passage with what precedes and follows. Let this consideration encourage you; all important truths are, in some place or other, made so literally plain, that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; and we can join the apostles in saying, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly and speakest no proverb." Wisdom is described as saying, "All the words of my mouth are plain to him that understandeth." Martin Luther gives this direction, "Let the Christian reader's first object always be to find out the literal meaning of the word of God; for this, and this alone, is the whole foundation of faith and Christian theology.—It is the very substance of christianity; the only thing which stands its ground in distress and temptation; it is what overcomes the gates of hell, together with sin, and death, and triumphs to the praise and glory of God."

13. *Endeavour to obtain a view of the whole truth which was intended to be made known by the passage you are reading, and to discover its proper application.*—Under these general terms, I would comprehend the ascertaining of every meaning or sense, by which we improve and apply the facts or truths of Scripture, to

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the Bible, 5 vol. 4to. and Matthew Henry on the Bible, 6 vol. 4to. He believes Brown's Bible, 2 vol. 4to. is very useful. For those who are unable to purchase the above extensive works, he would recommend Jones's Scripture Directory, and Watts's Scripture History.

While the writer recommends Commentaries, he would say, be not a slave to them. He is both ignorant and enthusiastical who despises them altogether, but he who gives himself up entirely to them will often be misled. Judge for yourself. Take your religion simply from the Scriptures, and you will have the comfort of knowing that it comes pure from God. The best Commentaries of all are meditation and fervent prayer; they produce a state of mind which enables us to see the force of Scripture declarations, and dispose us to receive them in their simplicity. The writer is thus cautious in recommending Commentaries, because he thinks the habit of reading the Bible *always* with them, is prejudicial; and that there are great advantages in reading the *pure word* of God. He cannot but in the main agree with a writer, who says, "The Sciptures are so darkened with expositions, and buried under such a heap of rubbish, that it is a kind of labour even for the Spirit of God to remove it. The minds of the poor, not being sophisticated by the false glosses which obscure the plain sense of Scripture, are in a much better condition for understanding it than the learned;" here meaning by the learned, those whose minds have been biassed, either by false sentiments and prejudices; or those who, by trusting too much to their discernment and information on other subjects, are not inclined with teachable and humble hearts, to attend to the instruction of the Bible.

* Closely connected with this rule is the *duty of conversing about the Scriptures.* It is a plain command often to be talking of the word of God, Deut. xi. 19. Those who feared the Lord are described as speaking often to one another, Mal. iii, 16. Some persons meet occasionally to read a chapter and converse upon it, and when this is done in a right spirit, it must be advantageous, each one probably being able to communicate something that would not have occurred to the others. When the disciples went to Emaus, they talked together of all those things which had happened, and while they thus communed, Jesus himself drew near." Luke xxiv, 14, 15. We cannot have him personally with us, but we have full reason to hope that he will be spiritually present when we meet in his name

our own edification, or the good of others. While the Bible affords instruction, adapted to the most simple and ignorant, it contains a depth of wisdom sufficient to reward the most diligent enquirer. Our Lord says, "*search the Scriptures.*" In this expression, he alludes to the practice of men who dig in a mine: and he that would find the precious ore must dig deep. Thus "seek and ye shall find." You cannot thoroughly understand your Bible without an experimental acquaintance, with the name and influence of the truths it reveals, and a knowledge of its spirit and intention. With respect to the *experience of the truth*, much of the Bible must be unintelligible to a worldly man; because he has never experienced many of the blessings mentioned, and he can therefore have no right conception of them. Thus, he must be unacquainted with what is meant by the spiritual mind, the peace of God, joy in the Holy Ghost, &c. but, "he that is spiritual discerneth these things;" he knows what is meant by them from his own experience. With respect to *the spirit and intention of the word*, our Lord said to his disciples on one occasion, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." John vi. 63. There is often a deep and valuable meaning conveyed under simple expressions. As this is an important part of our subject, I will endeavour to be more particular. When any thing is forbidden or commanded, the principle from which the evil or good flows, is also comprehended. The principle applies to the thoughts, as well as to the words and actions. In many passages, therefore, the Bible is in this respect to be spiritually understood. Thus when it is said, "Thou shalt not kill," it *literally* means, that we should not deprive another of his life; but the *spiritual* meaning applies to the words and thoughts; and requires us to love others as ourselves. See Matt. v, 21, 22. Again, the truth is often conveyed by figurative language, types, and parables, the spiritual meaning or interpretation of which, it is important to ascertain.—(See the observations on figurative language, types, parables, and prophecies, chap. 5, and also on the psalms, page 26.) Farther, there is a practical improvement to be derived from all the events recorded, "Those things, happened unto them for examples and they are written for our admonition." (See History, page 31.) A passage may also be accommodated with advantage, to our own use, or the edification of others, where it would not be right to build any truth upon it, and where it would be idle to make it a main argument in convincing others. Knowledge of the Bible, simplicity of mind, singleness of heart and fervent prayer, will, through the teaching of the Spirit, guide a man to those views of divine truth, which will be most profitable to his soul, and the Holy Spirit will bring passages home to the heart with a life and power beyond all human instruction. Do not, however, hastily imagine that persons who do not see things exactly as you do, are therefore, blind and ignorant, and not under the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

This rule may be and has been abused; yet it is not on that account to be disregarded. He who endeavours to apply any passage, before he has obtained its literal meaning, may say what is pious and true in itself, yet it may be quite foreign to the text from which he would deduce it: and thus he may bring an important rule into contempt.*

14. *Read the Bible, observing its testimony throughout to Jesus Christ.* This is what he himself directs, "search the Scriptures for they testify of *me.*"

* It seemed unnecessary to add further rules about the different senses of Scripture, which rather perplex common readers. One says, that five different senses may be distinguished in the Scriptures. The grammatical, historical or literal, allegorical, or figurative, anlaogical and tropological or moral, and that they may all be observed in the word Jerusalem. In the grammatical sense, it signifies, *vision of peace;* in the literal or historical, the *capital city of Judea;* in the allegorical, the *church militant;* in the analogical, the *church triumphant;* and, according to the moral, a *faithful soul*, of which Jerusalem is a kind of figure.—Respecting these and other subtleties, I would say, what Franck says of logical reading, "Let us guard against supposing that we are mighty in the Scriptures, if we be more solicitous to analyze a text, than concerned about understanding and applying it.—In the exercise of refined subtleties we may lose sight of holy christian simplicity, and sacrifice the edification of ourselves and others."

John v, 39. All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning *me*. Luke xxiv, 44; and again he says, Moses wrote of *me*. John v, 46, 47. "To *him*, says Peter, give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts x, 43. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Rev. xix, 10. See also, John xx. 31. Jesus Christ is the key that unlocks this sacred treasure, and opens to us what before were mysteries. The grand secret in the study of the Scriptures is therein to discover him, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Then "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God will shine in your heart, in the face of Jesus Christ." Read the Bible with a view to guide you to this knowledge of him. "Jesus Christ our Saviour," says Platon, "is the whole strength and substance of the Holy Scriptures, who was appointed before the beginning of time for our glory; believed on from the foundation of the world; announced by the prophets, and prefigured by the sacrifices." "The knowledge of Christ," says Cecil, "is a wonderful mystery. To understand and enter into his various offices and characters, the glories of his person and work—his relation to us, and ours to him, and to God the Father and Spirit through him—this is the knowledge of Christ. To know Jesus Christ for ourselves is to make him our consolation, delight, strength, righteousness, companion and end."

The following extract from Leighton contains the substance of many of the above rules: "Let this also commend the Scriptures much to our diligence and affection, that their great theme is our Redeemer, and salvation wrought by him—that they contain the display of his excellencies, and are the lively picture of his matchless beauty. Were we more engaged in reading them we should daily see more of Him in them, and so of necessity love him more. But we must look into them carefully. The letter is but the case; the spiritual sense is what we should desire to see. We usually read the Scriptures in haste and see no further than their outside, and therefore find so little sweetness in them; we *read* them, but we *search* them not as he requires. Would we dig into these golden mines, we should find treasures of comfort that cannot be spent, but which would furnish us in the hardest times."*

Reader, are the chief of the preceding rules plainly pointed out or implied in Scripture, as needful or profitable to be regarded, in order to attain the knowledge of the truth? Determine, then, in dependence on divine strength, to observe them. Learn, also, a lesson of candour towards others. Need you wonder at the different opinions which prevail among Christians. Who is there that at all times, nay, may it not be said at any time, reads his Bible with all the dispositions, and attending to all the rules which have been mentioned? Who is altogether "without partiality?" Do not the best sometimes bring to the Bible sentiments and opinions formed before hand? Be you, then, the more earnest, diligently to seek grace for yourself, that you may receive the truth in the love of it and be saved."

CHAPTER XII.

Scripture Prayers.

The Bible not only shows us, that in searching it we want divine help, and encourages us by its promises to expect we shall obtain it, but words are also put into our mouths; the Bible gives us the prayers of those who attained the greatest knowledge of divine truth, such as David, Paul, &c. Endeavour, then, to enter into the spirit of their prayers; remembering that it is not the expression of the lips, but the desire of the heart which God regards, and, that the spirit of prayer comes from God alone.

The following prayers are suitable *before you read:*

* It would have been easy to have had further rules, but those have been given which appeared most material. Many rules relating to particular subjects will be found in the fifth and other preceding chapters.

Lord open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. (Ps. cxix, 18.) Teach me thy statutes, make me to understand the way of thy precepts. (Ps. cxix, 26, 27.) Open, Lord, my understanding, that I may understand the Scriptures; open my heart to attend to the things spoken of in thy word. Luke xxiv, 44. Acts xvi, 14.

May the Spirit of truth teach me all things, and guide me into all truth. John xiv, 26; xv, 13.

Lord God, whose word endureth forever, grant that laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking, I may as a new-born babe, desire the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby. 1 Pet. ii, 12.

O thou, who art the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto me the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of my understanding being enlightened, I may know what is the hope of thy calling, and what the riches of the glory of thy inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of thy power to those who believe, according to the working of thy mighty power. Ephes. i, 17, &c.

Grant Lord, that I may receive thy word with all readiness of mind; (Acts xvii, 11.) not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God. (1 Thess. ii, 13.) Incline my heart to do thy will that I may know of the doctrine, whether it be of God (John vii, 17.): and give me the love of the truth, that I may be saved. (2 Thess. ii, 16.)

The following prayers are suitable *after reading:*

O Lord, my God, I am but a child, give thy servant an understanding heart, that I may discern between good and bad. (1 Kings iii, 7—9.) Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths, lead me in thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation. Ps. xxv, 4, 5.

O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments. Ps. cxix, 5, 6.

Lord, put thy Spirit within me; and cause me to walk in thy statutes and keep thy judgments and do them. (Ezek. xxxvi, 27.) Grant, that I may be filled with the knowledge of thy will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; and that I may walk worthy of thee unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Col. i, 9, 10.

Lord, grant that by the Holy Scriptures I may be made wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. iii, 15.) O may I receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save my soul, (James i, 21): and obey from the heart, that form of doctrine, which has been delivered to me. Rom. vi, 17.

O Lord, put thy laws into my mind, and write them in my heart, and let me not be a forgetful hearer but a doer of thy word. Heb. viii, 7. James i, 22.

Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, I bless thee for the sacred treasure of the Holy Scriptures; and I beseech thee to grant, that Satan may never come and take away that which has been sown in my heart. Grant also, that receiving thy word now with gladness, I may never hereafter be offended by affliction or persecution, and so become barren and unfruitful: nor let thy word be choked, by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things; but give me grace, to receive it into an honest and good heart, and keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience an hundred fold; for the sake of Jesus Christ.—Luke viii.

From the 119th Psalm.

Jesus my Saviour, and my Lord,
To thee I lift mine eyes,
Teach and instruct me by thy word,
And make me truly wise.

Make me to know and understand,
Thy whole revealed will;
Fain would I learn to comprehend
Thy love more clearly still.

O may thy word my thoughts engage,
In each perplexing case,
Help me to feed on ev'ry page,
And grow in ev'ry grace.

O let it purify my heart.
And guide me all my days,
Thy wonders, Lord, to me impart,
And thou shalt have the praise.

CHAPTER XIII.

An Address to Persons in different Stations of life on the duty of studying the Bible.

Reader, the sum of what I have said, is, *search the Scriptures*, habitually and daily, with fervent prayer for the help of God's Holy Spirit. The command is express, the obligation universal, and the benefit immense. Whatever situation of life you may fill, there is something in the Scriptures that concerns *you*, something that it is infinitely important *you* should know or remember.

Parents, Heads of Families—read the Bible for your own sakes, and for the sake of your children and servants. God expects that you will not only read it in private, but requires you "to keep the words which he hath commanded, in your heart—to teach them diligently to your children—to talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." Deut. vi, 6, 7. How then can you live in the neglect of family instruction and prayer? or how can you instruct your family, if you yourselves are wilfully ignorant of this book? If you have hitherto neglected this great duty, neglect it no longer. Remember what the Lord says concerning Abraham. —"I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." Gen. xviii, 9. Remember also, the determination of Joshua —"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Follow those bright examples.

Females in every class and station.—There is much in the Bible to direct, edify, and comfort you. How greatly the religion of your whole family, under God, depends on your exertions; whilst the father is from home, it is yours "to guide the house; to train up a child in the way he should go," to watch over immortal plants, and cultivate them for the paradise above. It is yours also, to attend to the religion of your female servants; whilst they daily labour for your temporal ease and comfort, O neglect not their eternal welfare. Who is sufficient for these things? In the Bible you will find full directions to guide you, and examples for you to follow. It is remarkable how many characters of holy women are set before you. Mark Sarah's reverence for her husband, and faith in her God. Seek for Hannah's spirit of prayer, Ruth's devotedness of heart, and Abigail's wisdom. Copy Elizabeth's blameless deportment, Anna's holy expectation, Mary's affection to her Redeemer, and Dorcas's labours of love. Follow the steps of Lois and Eunice, through whose pious care Timothy was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, even from a child. It is evident, if you wish to fulfil aright the duties of your station, *you* ought to study this book. See Titus ii, 3, 4. 1 Tim. ii, 9. v, 14. 1 Pet. iii, 3. Prov. xxxi.

Children—you also should read the Bible, not merely as a task book, but to become wise unto salvation. I know even young children, who love to retire by themselves, that they may read this blessed book, and pray to God in secret. Jesus says, "suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." And again, "they that seek me early shall find me." The child Samuel early sought the Lord—Josiah was but 8 years old when he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord—Jesus, at 12 years old, was found in the temple—Timothy knew the Scriptures from a child. In them you will read about Jesus Christ—how he became a child for you, and how kind he was to children: there you will learn also, that it is your duty to love one another, and to love and obey your parents and teachers. (See Ephes. vi, 1—3. Col. iii, 20. 1 John iv.) *You* therefore should read your Bible.

Young men—you must read the Bible. You are about to enter the world—you will therefore be exposed to innumerable dangers and temptations, and "wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto, according to God's word." Psalm cxix, 9. David was wiser than his enemies, and had more understanding than his teachers or

his elders, because he meditated on God's testimonies, and kept his precepts. Psalm cxix, 98, 99, 100. O! that I could prevail upon you to imitate David's example. It would keep you sober minded, and give a right direction to all that ardour and zeal, by which youth is distinguished. It would preserve you from innumerable sins, give you peace of mind, and lead you to eternal glory. Whatever your companions say, let me entreat you—read your Bible.

Servants—you also should read your Bible. Perhaps some of you are in hard service, under severe masters. The word of God will comfort you in the worst service. "Thy statutes," says David, "have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage." Psalm cxix, 54. Others may be in the houses of pious persons, where the Bible is daily read in the family. How great are your privileges: be thankful for them, and do not think it enough merely to hear the Bible with your outward ears, but meditate upon its truths, and show that you really value it by reading it in private, when your other duties will allow you to do so. There you will find an account of pious servants—you will see how faithfully Abraham's servant obeyed his master; (Gen. xxiv.) how a servant maid was useful to Naaman, the captain of the king of Assyria's army—you will see the punishment of a lying servant in Gehazi. (2 Kings v.) There you will find your duty fully pointed out and explained. Col. iii, 22—25. Ephes. vi, 5—8. Titus ii, 9, 40. You see, therefore *you* must read the Bible.

In short, all classes of men and women, in every age, in every situation, kings and subjects, ministers and people, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, rich and poor, righteous and wicked, prosperous and unfortunate, learned and unlearned, and all kinds of persons, may, as Bishop Cranmer says, "learn in this book all things, what they ought to do, and what they should not do, as well concerning Almighty God, as also concerning themselves and all others. And briefly, to the reading of the Scriptures none can be enemies, but that either be so sick that they love not to hear of any medicine, or else that be so ignorant, that they know not Scripture to be most healthful medicine."

Consider farther, your peculiar privileges in having the Bible. It was the great advantage of the Jews over all other nations of the world, that "unto them were committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii, 2. Now this advantage is imparted to you; it is not given to all nations or persons: many are longing for Bibles, who have not the means to procure them. Let the following fact speak for itself. "A farmer in one of the northern provinces of Norway, who had often endeavored to procure a Bible, but was never so happy as to get that precious volume into his possession, brought at last a cow to the next market town, and offered her in exchange for one, but in vain; there were no copies for sale, and those who enjoyed the blessing, would not deprive themselves of it, for the sake of the temporal advantage that was offered." Now, if others be thus longing for the Bible, and you who have it are regardless and careless about it, have you not reason to fear, that God will take that which you thus lightly esteem from you, and give it to those who will make a better use of it? May you not reasonably expect, that he will send "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but (what is far worse) a famine of hearing the words of the Lord; so that you may run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, and yet not find it." Amos viii, 11, 12.

I will conclude this chapter by addressing two different classes of characters:—

1. *Those who have hitherto read their Bibles merely as a matter of form or custom, or in order to be able to say they had done so; or, to satisfy the clamors of their conscience.* To you, this must have often been a task. The Bible must very frequently have appeared a dull book. You may have some general knowledge of its contents, but you must be ignorant of its spirit. O attend then to the rules, which I have endeavoured to give you, drawn from the Bible itself. Look for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and then, what has been your task, will become your highest enjoyment; what was dull and tedious, will become full of interest; what

was a blunted and useless weapon against the enemies of your soul, will become the sword of the spirit, which none of them can resist. You will then, with David, rejoice at God's word, as one that findeth great spoil, and it will be sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb.

2. *Those who have never read their Bibles before.* How dangerous is your state. While you neglect this book, it is an evident sign that you are not real Christians. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice, and they follow me." *They* can say what *you* cannot.—"O how I love thy law." Let me apply to you, the striking language of the first homily—"what excuse will *you* make at the last day before Christ, that delight to hear or read men's fancies and inventions more than his most holy gospel, and will find no time to do that, which chiefly above all things you should do, and will rather read other things than that, for which you ought to leave reading all other things." And must I leave you content to remain in this sad condition? Why will you sit in darkness, when you may have light? Let me entreat you, let me prevail upon you, to begin from this time, to read a portion of this blessed book every day. You know not what advantages you have been losing, what privileges you have been neglecting, and from what a rich feast you have been turning away; now then delay no longer, but embrace the present opportunity. The Bible will illuminate your mind; its precepts will guide you through every difficulty, its doctrines will support you under every trial, its promises will console you in many sorrows, and will enable you even to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil.

My parting advice, then, to every reader, is,

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

The object in this Table is rather to give some of the great Periods and Dates of History, than a minute Detail of Events: and it must be understood, that there are several differences about many of the Dates. Those who wish for further information, may find it in Blair's or Playfair's Chronology.

First Period.—*From the Creation to the Deluge.*

B. C.

4004 The Creation—Man formed upright, holy, and happy—his fall, *Gen.* i—iii.
3876 Cain murders Abel, *Gen.* iv.
3817 Methuselah is born, *Gen.* v, 22.
3074 Adam dies, aged 930, *Gen.* v, 4, 5.
2948 Noah is born, *Gen.* v, 28, 29.
2469 Noah is commanded to build an ark, *Gen.* vi.
2448 Shem, Ham, and Japhet born about this time, *Gen.* v, 32.
2348 Methuselah dies, aged 969, *Gen.* v, 26, 27. The Deluge is sent upon the earth, *Gen.* vi, vii.

Second Period.—*From the Flood to the calling of Abraham.*

2347 Noah leaves the ark, *Gen.* viii, ix.
2281 Heber is born, *Gen.* xi, 14.
2126 Terah, Abraham's father, is born, *Gen.* xi, 24.
1998 Noah dies, aged 950 years, *Gen.* ix, 28, 29.
1921 Abram, at God's command, leaves Haran and comes to Canaan, which is promised to his seed, *Gen.* xii.

Third Period.—*To the death of Moses.*

1917 Lot leaves Abram to dwell near Sodom, *Gen.* xiii.
1898 God covenants with Abram—changes his name, and promises Isaac, *Gen.* xvii. Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed by fire—Lot is saved, *Gen.* xviii, xix.
1897 Isaac is born, *Gen.* xxi.
1872 God commands Abraham to offer up Isaac, *Gen.* xxii.
1846 Shem, the son of Noah, dies, *Gen.* xi, 10, 11.

B. C.
1836 Esau and Jacob born, *Gen.* xxv.
1822 Abraham dies, aged 175, *Gen.* xxv.
1817 Heber dies, aged 464, *Gen.* xi.
1760 Jacob having obtained the blessing, flees into Mesopotamia, *Gen.* xxvii, 28.
1753 to 1732 The twelve sons of Jacob born—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asser, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin, *Gen.* xxix, 31
1739 Joseph is sold to the Midianites, xxxvii.
1716 Isaac dies, *Gen.* xxxv.
1706 Jacob and all his family go down into Egypt, *Gen.* xliii—xlvi.
1688 Jacob dies in Egypt, aged 147, *Gen.* xlviii.
1634 Joseph dies, *Gen.* i.
1577 The bondage of Israel in Egypt begins, *Exod.* i.
1574 Aaron is born, *Exod.* vii 3.
1571 Moses is born, *Exod.* ii, 1.——Job probably lived about this time. He is supposed to have been of the family of Esau.
1491 God appears to Moses in a burning bush, and sends him to deliver Israel from Egypt—the plagues are sent, Israel pass through the Red Sea, *Exod.* iii,—xv.
1490 The law is given, and the tabernacle set up—Israel condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness for their rebellions—Manna, quails, and water are given, *Lev.* xx, and *Numb.*
1450 Moses dies, *Deut.* xxiv.

Fourth Period.—*To the building of the Temple.*

1450 Israel, under Joshua, pass over Jordan, *Josh.* i.
1446 The conquest of Canaan advances, and is completed by degrees, *Josh.* xi.
1426 Joshua dies, aged 110, *Josh.* xxiv.
1410 The tribe of Benjamin nearly destroyed, *Judg.* xix, &c.
1394 Othniel delivers Israel, *Judg.* iii.
1336 Ehud slays Eglon king of Moab, and delivers Israel.
1294 Deborah and Barak deliver Israel, *Judg.* iv, v.
1247 Gideon delivers Israel, *Judg.* vi, vii, viii.
1207 Gideon dies, and 69 of his descendants are murdered by Abimelech, who afterwards perishes miserably, *Judg.* ix.
1203 to 1125 Tola, Jair, Sampson, Jeptha, and Ibzan, successively judge or deliver Israel, *Judg.* x.—xv.
1120 Eli's sons are slain, and Eli dies, 1 *Sam.* ii—iv.
1100 Samuel, having brought the people to repentance, judges Israel, 1 *Sam.* vii.
1085 David is born.
1075 Saul is made king, 1 *Sam.* viii, xi.
1056 Saul perishes, and David is acknowledged king by Judah, 1 *Sam.* xxxi.
1048 David is anointed king over all Israel, 2 *Sam.* i.
1035 David's great fall and deep repentance, 2 *Sam.* xi, xii.
1021 Absalom's rebellion and death, 2 *Sam.* xv—xx.
1015 David's death. Solomon succeeds him, 1 *Kings* i, ii.
1012 Solomon lays the foundation of the Temple, 1 *Kings* vi.
1005 The Temple is finished, and dedicated with great solemnity and joy, 1 *Kings* vi, vii.

Fifth Period.—*To the Captivity.*

Most of the dates of this period will be found in the Table of the Kings of Israel and Judah, (see page 25.)
622 Nineveh is taken and desolated by the Medes and Chaldeans, *Nahum*, i,—iii.
606 The 70 year's captivity begins—Daniel taken to Babylon, *Dan.* i.
588 Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Jews carried into captivity, 2 *Kings* xxv, *Jer.* xxxix—xlii.

Sixth Period.—*To the coming of Christ.*

584 Nebuzar-adan, carries the remnant of the Jews into captivity, *Jer.* lii, 30.
572 Tyre taken by Nebuchadnezzar after a siege of 13 years, and Egypt afterwards invaded by him, *Ezek.* xxix.
538 Cyrus the Persian takes Babylon, slays Belshazzar, and transfers the kingdom to Cyaxerxes, called Darius the Mede. The Assyrian and Babylonian, the 1st great or universal empire ends, and the Medo-Persian begins, *Dan.* v, vii.
536 Cyrus proclaims liberty to the captive Jews—a remnant of the Jews go to rebuild Jerusalem, *Ezra* i, &c. *Isa.* xlv, 1, &c.
534 They lay the foundation of the Temple, and are hindered by the Samaritans, *Ezra* iii, 8.
520 Haggai and Zechariah excite Jerubbabel and Joshua to set forward the building of the Temple, *Hag.* i, ii.—*Zech.* iii.
515 The second Temple is finished and dedicated, *Ezra* vi.
458 Ahasuerus, called also Artaxerxes, divorces Vashti, and makes Esther queen, *Esther* ii.
457 Ezra obtains a commission to restore and settle the state of the Jews, *Ezra*, vii, 7. Just 70 weeks of years before the death of Christ. *Dan.* ix, 24.
452 Haman's attempt against the Jews defeated, *Esther.*
445 Nehemiah is sent governor to Jerusalem, and goes back to Persia. *Neh.* i, iv.
432 He returns again, and proceeds in the work of reformation, *Neh.* xii.
The Samaritans build a temple on Mount Gerizim.
420 Malachi prophesies, *Mal.* i, iv.
332 Alexander the Great takes Tyre and Gaza, and visits Jerusalem, peaceably. He over-runs the Persian empire, after great victories.
330 Darius is slain; the Medo-Persian, the second universal empire ends, and is succeeded by the Grecian or Macedo-

B. C.

nian, the third universal empire, *Dan.* vii, 6. viii, 5.

323 Alexander dies at Babylon, and his dominions are divided into four kingdoms, *Dan.* xvii, 6. xviii, 8.

202 The Roman, or the fourth universal empire, succeeds the Grecian, *Dan.* ii, 22. vii 7.

168 Antiochus Epiphanes persecutes the Jews very severely—he puts a stop to the daily sacrifice, and builds a fortress to curb the Jews. Seven brethren and their mother are martyred.

165 The Maccabees oppose him with success, and the daily sacrifice is restored.

129 Hyrcanus conquers the Edomites, and compels them to be circumcised.

65 Pompey, a Roman commander, reduces Syria, thus ending the Grecian and establishing the Roman empire.

63 He takes Jerusalem, and the Jews become dependant on the Romans.

42 Antigonus and Herod oppose each other.

37 Herod takes Jerusalem, and is established in the royal authority.

17 He begins to rebuild, or thoroughly repair and beautify the temple.

6 He puts his two sons to death on a frivolous accusation of treason—he had before put his wife and mother to death.

Gabriel appears to Zacharias, and afterwards to the Virgin Mary, *Luke* i.

4 Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, is born at Bethlehem. He was born four years before the Christian Æra commences. Herod murders the children at Bethlehem, *Matt.* i.

Seventh Period.—*To the destruction of Jerusalem.*

A. C.

8 Judea is made a province of the Roman empire by Cyrenius, Governor of Syria—he first levied the taxes according to the register before made. The sceptre was departing from Judah for Shiloh was come, *Luke* ii.—*Gen.* xlix, 10.

8 Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, and is found among the teachers of the law, *Luke* ii.

27 Pontius Pilate made Procurator of Judea. John the Baptist begins his ministry. Jesus is baptized. *Matt.* iii. The public ministry of Christ extends three or four years.

33 Jesus Christ is crucified, *Matt.* xxvii.

35 Paul is converted at this time, or according to some, five years afterwards, *Acts* ix.

38 The Gospel of *Matthew* written in Judea.

52 *I.* and *II. Thessalonians* written from Corinth.

Galatians written from Corinth or Macedonia.

55 Felix appointed Governor of Judea. Festus succeeds him two years afterwards, *Acts* xxiv, 7.

56 *I. Corinthians* written from Ephesus.

57 *II. Corinthians* written from Macedonia.

A. C.

58 *Romans* written from Corinth.

61 *Ephesians* written from Rome.

James written at Jerusalem.

62 *Philippians*, *Collossians* and *Philemon*, written from Rome.

63 The Gospel of *Luke* written in Greece.

The epistles to the *Hebrews* written from Rome.

64 The *Acts* of the Apostles written in Greece.

I. Timothy and *Titus* written in Greece or Macedonia.

I. Peter written from Rome.

64 A general persecution of the Christians, under Nero.

65 The Gospel of *Mark* written from Rome.

II. Timothy written from Rome.

II. Peter written from Rome.

68 Somewhere about this time Paul and Peter are martyred.

70 Jerusalem is taken by the Romans under Titus, and all the predictions respecting it are exactly fulfilled. The Temple is burnt, and not one stone left upon another: 1,337,490 Jews perish miserably in the seige. The remainder of the Jews are scattered among all nations. The Jewish state ends. Christianity was diffused over a great part of the known world towards the end of this century. *Matt.* xxiv, 14.

Jude written.

90 *I. John*, written in Judea; and *II.* and *III. John* from Ephesus.

Ninth Period.—*To the public and national establishment of Christianity by Constantine.*

95 A general persecution under Domitian. John banished to the Isle of Patmos, writes the book of *Revelations*, *Rev.* i, 9.

97 John returns to Ephesus, and writes his Gospel in Asia Minor.*

100 The Christians are persecuted.

John dies at Ephesus, in the 102d year of his age.

107 Ignatius, an eminent Christian, martyred at Rome. Christianity spreads rapidly and extensively among the Gentiles, *Rev.* vi. 2.

115 The Jews rebelling are severely chastised. Immense numbers of Jews, Romans, and Greeks are slaughtered, *Rev.* vi, 4.

138 to 193 The Britons supposed to have received Christianity in this century if not before. Long continued searcities prevail through the Roman empire, *Rev.* vi, 5, 6.

193 to 274 Many wars take place, and an extensive and destructive pestilence rages through the Roman empire for 15 years together.—There were above 20 Emperors and 30 usurpers in this period, and many persecutions, *Rev.* vi, 7, 8.

* There is considerable uncertainty respecting the periods when, and at the places from whence, many of the Gospels and Epistles were written.

303 A severe persecution begins and continues 10 years: horrid cruelties prevail, and innumerable martyrs suffer, but Christianity ultimately triumphs, *Rev.* vi, 9, 10. xii, 7, &c.

306 Constantine favours Christianity. The great lights of the heathen world, the powers civil and ecclesiastical, were eclipsed and obscured; the heathen Emperors and Cæsars changed; the priests and officers removed; the temples abolished, and their revenues appropriated to better purposes. *Rev.* vi, 12, 17. xii, 5.

313 He publishes an edict in favour of Christianity. The Gospel is very extensively preached, and immense multitudes embrace Christianity. *Rev.* vii. 1, &c.

325 The first General Council is held at Nice.

TENTH PERIOD.—*To the rise of Popery and Mahometanism.*

337 Constantine dies, and the Arians persecute the Orthodox.

361 Julian, the apostate, re-establishes Paganism, and is afterwards cut off in battle.

395 Theodosius, after doing all in his power to promote Christianity, and reigning 16 years, dies.

The Huns and Goths break in upon the Roman Empire.

The fertile plains of Phocis and Bœotia were covered with a deluge of Barbarians, who burnt the villages, massacred the males, and drove away the females with the cattle and spoil. *Rev.* viii, 7. xii, 15.

412 Attila, at the head of a vast army of Huns, ravaged the Empire for 14 years, shedding the blood of immense multitudes, and desolating the country with fire and sword. *Rev.* viii. 8, 9.

450 Genseric, a bigoted Arian and king of the Vandals, unexpectedly invades the Empire with 300,000 Vandals and Moors from Africa, takes Rome and abandons that city to his troops. *Rev.* viii, 10, 11.

476 The Roman Empire is subverted, *Rev.* viii, 12, 13.

Soon afterwards is divided into ten kingdoms, *Rev.* xiii, 1. *Dan.* vii, 24.

496 Christianity publicly professed in France.

597 Augustine, the monk, arrives in England with 40 Benedictine monks.

606 Boniface, the third Bishop of Rome, procures the title of Universal Bishop from the Emperor Phocas. The Popes afterwards have three kingdoms, Rome, Ravenna, and the Lombards. *Dan.* vii, 8.

About the same time Mahomet commences his imposture in the East, *Rev.* ix, 1, 2.

622 Mahomet expelled from Mecca. The Mahometan Æra, called the Hegira or flight, begins,

ELEVENTH PERIOD.—*To the Reformation.*

632 The Saracens (followers of Mahomet) conquer various countries in the East. Their armies were expressly charged before they entered Syria, to destroy no palm trees, fields of corn, fruit trees or cattle; but only to kill for their own eating. *Rev.* ix, 4.

666 Public prayers are ordered to be read in Latin by the Pope.

756 The Pope is fully established as a temporal Prince, the Exarchate of Ravenna being given to him and his successors.

787 The worship of images is authorised by the 2d Council of Nice.

820 Claude, Bishop of Turin, opposes Popery.

1050 to 1090 The Turks erect four Sultanies, or kingdoms, near the Euphrates. *Rev* ix, 14, &c. The Crusades are carried on with blind and extravagant zeal.

1160 The Waldenses zealously oppose Popery, and preach the true and everlasting Gospel; immense numbers of them are slaughtered, and the rest are dispersed into other countries. *Rev.* xiv, 6, 7.

1281 The Turks make the first conquest over the Christians.—The last extension of Their dominion was 391 years afterwards, in 1672. *Rev.* ix. 15.

1370 Wickliffe and his followers propogate the truth in England.

1414 The Bohemians oppose Popery, and declare Rome to be Mystical Babylon, and the Pope to be Antichrist. John Huss and Jerome of Prague are burnt, *Rev.* xiv, 8.

1453 The Turks take Constantinople, using artillery and gunpowder, which were first invented about this time. *Rev.* ix, 17.

1517 The great Reformation begun by Luther and others in Germany, and by Zuinglius in Switzerland. They loudly protest against the idolatries of Rome, and strongly oppose Purgatory, asserting the eternity of punishment, and the immediate happiness of the righteous. *Rev.* xiv, 9—13.

1529 The name of *Protestants* given to the Reformers at the Diet of Spires. The Reformation introduced into France by Calvin.

1534 The Reformation begun in England under Henry VIII.

During all this period the real servants of Christ are greatly persecuted by the Roman Empire. *Rev.* xiii, 7.

The parts of prophecies assigned to the above events cannot all be considered as certain. Though good men agree in the great outline, yet there are many differences as to particular parts. The Rev. T. SCOTT's Interpretation has been chiefly followed.

CHAPTER XV.

Remarks on the History of Mankind, and the Church of God, chiefly with respect to the necessity, progress, and ultimate triumph of divine revelation.

Many reflections will naturally arise upon a review of the events detailed in the preceding Chronological Table. It may be useful to endeavour to direct the Christian reader's attention more particularly, to the necessity and effect of Revelation. The object, then, of the present Chapter is to suggest a few observations.

First.—On the providence of God in the general history of the world, in considering which, the necessity and value of revealed truth will be manifested.

Secondly.—On the history of the Church of God, in which it will be seen, that that Church has continued to exist from the beginning, has ever been the light of the world, and that revelation has been the great means of keeping alive true religion.—And

Thirdly.—On the prospect, which the Bible presents to us, of the ultimate triumph of divine truth, and the happy consequences which follow.

First.—*The providence of God in the history of mankind.*

The history of mankind exhibits many things which are truly wonderful, and which, whilst we are in this imperfect state, and "know but in part," we cannot expect fully to comprehend. But the longer the world continues, the more we may hope to discover the general principles of the divine government, and to trace the great features of God's dispensations. Nor is this, by any means, a matter of merely curious speculation. It is a subject, the contemplation of which is calculated to confirm our faith, to animate our hope, to encourage us to do the whole will of God, to justify his government, and to excite exertions in his cause.

If we look attentively at the dealings of God with mankind, as displayed in the history of the world, we shall find this great principle running through them all: *God shows, on a large scale, and during a long course of time, the effect of a variety of plans, very different from each other; and proves, in the result of the whole, the necessity and value of revealed truth.* He thus overrules all things to promote his glory, and the good of those who obey him, and in so doing he establishes his own word, and by every dispensation, adds something to its evidence, as the truth of the living God.

In order to show the existence of the principle which has been laid down, the history of the world may be divided into different periods.

I. *From the Fall of Man to the Deluge.*

It is observable, that though man became liable to death immediately after his fall, and his state, with respect to God, was so materially changed that he may well be considered to have been spiritually dead as soon as he had sinned, yet the sentence, as it respects the death of his body, was not speedily executed. Many lived upwards of 900 years. Thus a large number of cotemporary inhabitants were preserved on the earth, whilst it was thinly populated, and men had an opportunity of imparting to one another all the important information which they had acquired, at a time when memory was its only depository. But, besides these advantages, the protracted life of man had also the striking effect of showing the real state of human nature, and of proving that length of days was not, in itself, a means of leading men back to God, nor of inducing them in any way to seek for the recovery of what their first father had lost by his sin. Instead of using their extended age in returning to him and imploring his favour, it is evident that "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually:" and "because sentence against an evil work was not speedily executed, the hearts of the children of men were set in them to do evil." The length of life put fear afar off, and their passions rioted in wickedness, almost without restraint. The effect of their example extended the evil which they committed. A broad and obvious proof was thus given of the obliquity of

the human will, and it plainly appeared, that having lost his innocency and his integrity, man was not to be trusted with so long a term of years. We see it was right that God should interpose some awful and decisive check on impiety. Accordingly he sent the Deluge, by which the whole race was exterminated, with the exception of one family, the head of which had been singular, by his righteousness and obedience to the divine will. It pleased God also to reduce the period of human life, so that in succeeding ages, the wickedness of man might be confined within a narrow range. Thus a new lesson was given, of the need of cultivating the fear of the Lord.

II. *From the deluge to the commencement of the Babylonish monarchy.*

Here we are led, first, to notice the rise of a new population from one family, and their spreading abroad over the face of the earth.

The reflections, suggested by a review of this new state of society, might be carried to a great length.—The singular event of the confusion of languages was wisely designed by Him, who wonderfully brings good out of evil, to scatter men abroad, and separate them from one another. A number of states were thus raised up in different places. And as, by dividing a plant into several parts, the produce of the whole is increased, and each part rendered more independant and flourishing, so God by thus confounding their language, dispersed the people who had hitherto been one, over the face of the whole earth.

The flood must have taught the family of Noah a very instructive lesson. When the inhabitants of the world were a second time but one family, under such a teacher as Noah, and when so awful a dispensation as an universal deluge was fresh in their memory, giving force to his instruction; the knowledge of the true God must have made some impression, at least on their understandings. They could not be ignorant of his being, and of his government. But we see that in a very short time, a new feature of human weakness and depravity was exhibited. Before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, idolatry was there prevalent; and before his posterity left Egypt, false objects of worship were in that country very numerous. With the exception of the family of Abraham, idolatry seems soon to have overspread the earth. The practices of the nations which knew not God, strongly marked the corrupt tendency of our nature; "men became vain in their imaginations, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things;—they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator:—and as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them up to a reprobate mind."

The history of idolatry presents a great variety of appearances on its surface, but its leading principles, and practical effects, are very much of one kind. Cruelty, and sensuality, are to be traced in all its operations. It seems, as if it had pleased God to let us see, in the progress of idolatrous nations, that although idolatry might grow old, it not only could not impart wisdom, but its whole tendency was to envelope men in the grossest ignorance, and lead them *from* God, and consequently from true happiness. It was tried through a long succession of ages, and in various circumstances, in Chaldea, and in Egypt. It was tried in Palestine, before the Canaanites were expelled by the Israelites; and afterwards, when Jeroboam introduced it; and his successors kept up the abomination. It was tried in all the countries round about, in the first rude stages of their existence;—it was continued till they became powerful, refined, and in some instances, learned; but in all these stages, it still showed its genuine nature; it was "a departure from the living God."

In the early part of the history of the Bible, there are evident traces of the infancy of society. It is very visible that kingdoms were small, that kings were rather heads of families, or tribes, than rulers of a large population. Abraham, with only 318 trained servants, overcame *four* kings, those four having previously conquered *five* others, who had resisted

their usurpation. Gen xiv. This agrees with all that could be expected at that time. Chaldea had not risen to be a great empire; and Egypt was only in the beginning of its power. These two states however quickly acquired dominion, and displayed talent in the cultivation of such arts as were at that time held in esteem.

III. *The period during the Four Universal Monarchies.*

The operation of various causes which have been briefly noticed, scattered men into different states, independent of one another; and separated by the diversity of their languages, as well as by their local distance, and the natural barriers of mountains and oceans. This dispersion doubtless had its use at that time: and when the world was peopled, and the effects resulting from the existence of the small independent states of which it was composed, had been sufficiently shown, it pleased God to unite them all together in large monarchies. First, the Babylonian and Assyrian conquered all the parts of the world, which could then be much inhabited, or were at all distinguished. Next succeeded the Persian Monarchy, when Darius took possession of all that the Babylonian had subdued. After this, the Grecian Monarchy subdued all the surrounding nations in the time of Alexander the Great; who extended his empire to a limit over which no one man ever reigned before. And lastly, after some time, the Roman Empire rose, and subdued all that the preceding had ever claimed; to which it added new and extensive regions whereof they had no knowledge. All these great changes took place in the short space of about 400 years.

It is difficult for us at this distance of time, to state with exactness, what effects were produced by the overthrow of these empires, in such quick succession, but it is obvious, that such an intercouse between men would be established as had never before taken place. Their acquirements in knowledge, the result of the various objects of their pursuit in smaller societies, would be generally diffused, and a kind of community of talent would arise from their being all united in one political body. A new object of attention would present itself, that of acquiring foreign languages; and it is worthy of remark, that the Old Testament was translated into Greek, at the time when that language began to be universally known. An important step was thus taken, which would ultimately facilitate the spread of the knowledge of God's holy word, among people who in climate, manners, and sentiments, were at the greatest distance from each other.

Thus, the Divine Being showed, on a very extensive scale, how little could be done for man by huge empires; and that whether men lived in a contracted sphere, or had their views and designs enlarged by all the information then possessed, still their moral wants were not supplied, nor were they restored to the knowledge of God. Yet the progress of his providence, even by means of these systems of mighty oppression, (such it is to be feared, the universal monarchies were, in too great a degree,) opened a way for what the conquerors of antiquity never thought of; for by the extensive spread of the Jewish People and of their sacred books, (which were then scattered among all the nations of the earth,) the minds of men were excited to some enquiry after the living and true God; they were taught to look for a great deliverer, who was to arise and bless the world with the most important benefits. They were thus, in a degree, prepared to expect *him* who was to appear, as "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

During this period, and before the coming of Christ, we see a remarkable display of talent, in the advancement of the arts and sciences. The cultivation of human intellect has in a variety of ways done great service to men; while God, in his wisdom, has often made it the means of promoting his own glory. The heathen nations, till a few centuries prior to the coming of Christ, were in a state of great barbarity. They possessed a few of the useful arts, but scarcely any of the ornamental, or elegant; and of science, in its various branches, they were almost totally ignorant. Greece,

during the latter period of its history, and afterwards Rome, made great and rapid advances, not only in the cultivation of the mental powers, but also in improving the arts by which life is adorned, and which, by adding to the comforts of society, render men more capable of exerting their faculties. Individuals possessing the finest talents then appeared, and their works still remain as monuments of their genius. Had it been possible for fallen man of himself to find the way to God; had it been possible for unassisted human intellect to discover the foolishness of idolatry, and the right method of drawing near to the Father of Mercies, so clearly as to have rendered Revelation needless: never was there such an opportunity of doing so as then was presented. Idolatry had been tried in all possible varieties. Men knew what it *had been* in ruder ages. They saw what it *was* in more polished times. They could not be strangers to the tendency and effect of its operations. If ever the energies of reason could have been aroused to reject the vanities of the heathen, and to explore the path that would lead to happiness and to God—this was the time. But "the world by wisdom knew not God." Its wise men scarcely saw the folly of that pageantry, in which they were led, by various motives, to be occasionally actors. And when they did see it, and, by the absurdity of error, were obliged to confess, that idolatry was useless, and even worse than useless; it is evident, that the tendency of their minds was in an awful degree towards atheism. Like men in the dark, "they were feeling after God, if happily they might find him:" when they found him not, they denied his being: and this was the utmost extent of the wisdom of the wise!

One farther result, however, was very plain: the Gospel did not appear till men, by the cultivation of their faculties, were become capable of attending to its evidence; and of detecting falsehood, had there been any, in its statements. It did not appear, till what idolatry could do to corrupt mankind, and the inefficiency of philosophy to restore them, had been fully evinced. Then came forward that glorious system, which taught men "to turn from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus which delivereth us from the wrath to come."

Had Christianity appeared sooner, the evidence of its truth would have been less striking to succeeding ages; both because its necessity and utility would have been less obvious, and also, because men in general, especially those to whom it was first addressed, would have been less able to investigate its claims. Thus we see, that after God had permitted the wisdom of *men* to be tried on a large scale, that *his* wisdom might more particularly appeal both to their understandings and consciences: then, in the *fulness of time*, he sent forth his Son; and showed that what men esteemed to be wisdom, was mere folly; and what they condemned as folly, was the *wisdom and power of God.*

IV. *The Divine Dispensations during the period of the Jewish Œconomy at large.*

This includes a length of time, which runs through a considerable part of the two preceding periods, from the call of Abraham to the coming of Christ; but which, for the sake of the unity of the subject, is thus viewed altogether.

Abraham was called from Ur of the Chaldees, where the other branches of his family continued, as it appears, in idolatry. To him, and to his posterity was given the land of Canaan. His seed were designed to preserve the knowledge of the only true God, while the rest of the world was suffered to sink into idolatry, and all its attendant evils. To them was given the Law: with which was combined much that was both prophetic and figurative. The moral precepts of the law were the rule of life. The promises and sacrifices were designed to direct the faith, and support the hope of the penitent while he was seeking the mercy of God. The ceremonial observances were calculated for the peculiar use of the Jews, and tended in part to keep up a sense of the religious and moral declarations of God's revealed will, in part, were designed to unite them

together as a nation distinct from the rest of the world; and lastly, as it has been already often stated, (see pages 44, 47, &c.) one main intention of this ceremonial system, was, by figures, types, and shadows, to keep alive and constantly in view, the expectation of that PROPHET, whom Moses so expressly foretold, and who was afterwards given for "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and the salvation of God unto the ends of the earth.

By various wonderful displays of the providence and favor of God, the Jews were preserved through all the changes, and amidst the destruction of surrounding nations: and whether we view them in their own land;—in captivity; or in their return back again, we see the kindness and faithfulness of God to his chosen people. Their very chastisements mark that he was not forgetful either of his character, or his promises.

Thus it was seen what a ceremonial institution, like that of Judaism, could effect. We may observe the immense value of a few of the plain truths of revealed religion, when truly received and obeyed. How eminently the characters and ideas of the prophets were raised above those of all other men who ever lived, before the coming of Christ. We see how the weakness, as well as the strength, of that dispensation was manifested; since it could not prevent some from resting on mere external services; while it assisted others to look forward to the clearer light and glory which was to be revealed. And when no farther good end was to be answered from the repetition of Jewish rites; when it was seen what was the most that could be expected from them, under all the varied condition of the people;—in *the fullness* of time, as it respected the Jews as well as the Gentiles, God sent forth his Son!—A better hope was exhibited; a new dispensation, less splendid, but infinitely more rich in mercy, and in knowledge; more fitted to the wants of men, more universal in its character, and calculated for every nation under heaven, was brought forward. That which *was* glorious, had now no glory, by reason of the glory which excelled it: and when God spake to man by his Son, the former dispensation, which was now decayed, and waxen old, vanished away!

V. *From the time of Jesus Christ to the Reformation.*

Since the coming of Jesus Christ, a variety of changes have taken place in the world, and the Christian system has been exhibited in very different circumstances; but we still see the same great principle of God's government exemplified.

Christianity was first displayed in its purity: its doctrines and precepts were taught by the lips of inspiration; its ordinances were uncorrupted by the additions of men. The Christian church appeared beautiful in simplicity. Its adorning consisted in the holy principles and exemplary lives of its primitive members. In the striking language of one of the homilies, "In those times the world was won to Christendom, not by gorgeous, gilded, and painted temples of Christians, which had scarcely houses to dwell in; but by the godly, and as it were, golden minds, and firm faith of such as in all adversity and persecution, professed the truth of our religion." Some men beheld them and wondered: others hated the image of God and persecuted his people: but the power of his grace attending the plain preaching of his word, multitudes were turned from the vanity of the heathen to the knowledge and love of God. The youthful energy of the church appeared in its progress even in the midst of persecution; hence it became proverbial, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church."

It pleased God, however, to suffer even his gospel (as he had before suffered his law) to be corrupted by the wisdom of those who thought they could improve and adorn it. Often has it been seen, that the first period of the history of any particular church (or the time which was nearest to its reformation, whenever it has pleased God to give it a revival) has been the time in which it was purest both in principle and practice.—Corruption steals in by slow degrees. So it was in the primitive church. Its first days were peculiarly bright: then it began to wear a clouded appearance. And though it still

spread abroad a light which dispelled the night of idolatry; yet it became manifest that neither the profession of Christianity, nor an assent to the truth of the system, would save men's souls. Whilst the form remained, the power of godliness was greatly decayed; multitudes had a name to live who were in truth dead in trespasses and sins. At length corruption grew to such an enormous extent, as nearly to overwhelm every thing that had the appearance of vital Christianity. The Roman Church in the west, and the Greek church in the east, shewed, that though they retained many of the invaluable truths of the gospel, yet these were either so mutilated or deformed by the inventions of men, or so covered over with the superstitions of the times, that their real nature and influence was scarcely either seen or felt. It was manifest on a large scale, how little the external forms of the debased system which was then professed, were able to support the real kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some, indeed, (for God has ever had a church in the world) received and loved the truth, and sighed over what they could not remedy: but, in general, men spent their days in the slavery of superstitious ignorance, and there was reason to say, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people!"

At this time appeared the impostor Mahomet, a just scourge upon the Christian world, for its corruptions and dissensions. For above a century, his followers made most rapid and extensive conquests; and his false religion is still extended over a large part of the world. It seems probable, however, that in its inroads on Pagan countries, it, has, by destroying Idolatry, in some measure paved the way for the introduction and spread of the Gospel.

By the irruption of the northern swarms of Goths and Vandals into the Roman, and of the Saracens into the Grecian Empire, the power and enormities of the former governors of the civilized world were restrained; the people almost destroyed and the habits of those who remained materially altered. These events were nearly like a second flood, and are described as such, Rev. xii, 15, 16. Society had again to emerge, and appear in a form not seen before. Sometimes the great judge of the earth almost exterminates those nations which have sunk into corruption, and whose improvement is become morally impossible by inveterate habits of sin. Thus he teaches the world an awful lesson: he leaves an impression of his chastisement on mankind; and then begins anew.

So it was here: Society seemed to undergo another state of infancy; in time it grew, and began to feel its strength; then arose the Reformation. The Church of Rome had, on a large scale, displayed such enormities, that the necessity of an alteration was generally felt, and a new and important æra appeared.

VI. *The Period since the Reformation.*

The Reformation gradually extended itself over a considerable part of Europe; the struggles of the dying power of Rome in bloody persecutions, hastened the downfall of the anti-christian apostacy: and from that time, learning, arts, liberty, and (with some variations) the knowledge of the Gospel of God, have been, by degrees, advancing and extending.

Yet we cannot survey the present state of the world without many painful reflections. It has been calculated that, supposing its inhabitants to consist of 1000 millions, only 160 millions are even nominal Christians, 160 millions are Mahometans, 9 millions are Jews, and the large remainder of 656 millions are still IDOLATERS! Some remarks have already been made on idolatry as it existed in ancient times, and its characters are, on the whole, still the same. Late travels, and the enquiries and observations made by intelligent men, shew us, that both in savage and civilized nations, idolatry debases the mind and corrupts the heart. It is always attended by either superstition, or by a speculative atheism, whilst in its practical effects, it fosters the worst passions of fallen man, and hardens the heart against the reception of the truths of God. Mahometanism, it is true, holds one grand and important sentiment, that of the belief in one living and true God: yet with this exception, it is still allied too much to idolatry in its main in-

fluence, and both unite in opposition to him who is "the way, the truth and the life."

Thus nearly "the whole world lieth in wickedness," and in a great degree, we may apply the language of the apostle as descriptive of its condition; "Without Christ, having no hope, and without God!"

In the midst of this gloomy scene, the situation of England is elevated and distinguished. Here the word of God is eminently diffused. Here it is more openly and generally recognized as the standard of divine truth, than perhaps in any other country. Here, through divine mercy vital religion has especially spread, and from this happy land such opportunities may be obtained of diffusing its light, as no where else can be found. England has possessions in every quarter of the world. In Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and in most of the great islands of the globe. Its ships traverse the ocean in every direction. Thus from England, the gospel of God may, and we hope will, be spread through all the earth, and its light to the ends of the world. These things demand the thanksgivings ,and mark the duty of England.

So far we may remark, as to the providence of God in the present state of the world: other favorable symptoms will be afterwards noticed.

It will have been seen how awfully God has often executed punishments, upon those nations which have either corrupted or forsaken his truth. He sends "his judgments abroad upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness."

Here it may be objected, how singular is this! In every great alteration thousands are sacrificed and centuries move away in bringing forward the change:—why does he who knows all things, make his own works the theatre on which he shows, in his judgments, what infinite wisdom could teach *at once*, and infinite power *immediately* produce. We ought, however, to recollect, that the grandeur of our God is one reason for all this. With him "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." He knows the end from the beginning, and gains no information by whatever takes place. But men are prone to distrust *his* wisdom, and to form a high idea of the excellency of *their own*. By showing forth to his creatures, the full result of all the varieties of their wisdom and their weakness, he the more completely displays the purity and efficiency of whatever proceeds from himself. And in the end he will show, that he is "not slack concerning his promise;" he is continually fulfilling his own word, and is hastening the time, when his "way shall be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations."

If it be further objected, how is the existence of so much evil consistent with divine goodness? Without replying, that this is a necessary consequence of the freedom of will given to our first parents, and shewing that this objection affects natural as well as revealed religion—our ignorance furnishes a sufficient answer: the whole plan is not before us, and therefore not subject to our observation, nor within our comprehension. Perhaps our faculties are too limited to comprehend all the bearings of this subject. We can only resolve it into "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, whose judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out."

Secondly—*The History of the Church of God.*

Having taken a very general view of the History of Mankind, we now come to make some observations on the *History of the Church of God*, which it will be seen has ever existed in the world, and generally in the neighbourhood of the most flourishing nations.

The members of this church are those who, amidst that apostacy from God, and that wickedness in which the world every where lies, 1 John v, 19, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, receive the instructions which God has made known; look for salvation through the appointed Redeemer; rely on God's promises; and spend their lives in obedience to his will. In the observations made on the history of the Church, we shall chiefly confine our attention to the effects which have been produced by the knowledge of the truth, and by means of the Scriptures.

The main and only efficient cause of every revival of religion is the effusion of the Spirit of God. The promise must be first fulfilled, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring," before "one shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Yet whilst this is fully admitted and asserted, it may be useful to consider the means by which that Spirit usually works on the hearts of men.

Let the reader then bear in mind what has been said respecting the value of the Bible, (ch. i. and ii,) and it will be obvious that such a means, when brought into full exercise, is calculated to produce the greatest moral effects.

We think, therefore, it may be safely asserted, *that Divine Revelation has, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, ever been the great means of keeping alive true religion in the world:* by *revelation* here meaning, not merely a written or printed Bible, (as for upwards of 4000 years the complete Bible was neither written nor printed) but the truth which is revealed in the Bible.

The observations on this part of our subject naturally divide themselves into the Period before Christ came into the world, and the Period since his coming.

1. *The Period before Christ came.*

Adam had no sooner fallen, than the compassion of God was manifested in giving the promise of a mighty *Deliverer*, who should destroy the power of Satan; and Sacrifices seem to have been immediately appointed as emblems of the great sacrifice of Christ. Gen. iii, 21. iv, 4. It pleased God to manifest himself sensibly to the Patriarchs from time to time; and Adam, Seth, Enoch, &c. conveyed down from age to age the great truths of God.

The obedience of Noah to the Divine will is very observable. Commanded to build an ark for the saving of his family, he in faith begins, and steadily proceeds to carry on this work, till it is completed. Thus men in general were long warned before-hand of the danger of disobedience; their attention was powerfully called to this servant of God, and though doubtless he was much ridiculed and opposed, he was an eminent preacher of righteousness, and the light of his example must have shone far and wide. His faith and obedience were abundantly rewarded.

The Church of God was preserved, in the posterity of Shem the son of Noah among whom, till the word of God was committed to writing, men had full opportunity of ascertaining all the truths that were needful for them to know. We have another striking example of faith and obedience in Abraham, who, at the command of God, left his country and his father's house. His character was proved by many trials, and he became the father of the faithful, and in his seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. In his posterity, the truths of God were known, and we see, from time to time, in their history, that they trusted in the God of their fathers, and believed the promises made to Abraham. Hence Jacob and Joseph gave commandment that their bones should be carried up to Canaan, believing that God would bring their posterity thither from Egypt. The situation, character, and life of Joseph again brought the truths of God before the kingdom of Egypt and other nations.

To the Jews were committed the oracles of God, and amongst them we have an opportunity of discovering the effect of this divine word from time to time. The books of Moses were completed just before his death. Deut. xxxi, 24. Many exhortations were interspersed, requiring the Jews to keep the word of God in their hearts. Their kings also were directed to write copies of it when they came to the throne. The Pentateuch was committed to Joshua with that solemn direction:—"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." Joshua i, 8. Mankind had never before had a written revelation. We may easily conclude that Joshua attended to the direction given to him, and encouraged others to do the same. Few generations of Israel were more obedient to God, than that immediately succeed-

ing the death of Moses. "They served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived him;"—and though much of this may be attributed to the miracles they had seen, yet many of those miracles were wrought to confirm the law of God.

In the times of David and Solomon there was another great revival of religion, and the canon of Scripture was much enlarged. When we see from the Psalms, how continually David meditated in the word of God, and exhorted others to do so too, we may justly attribute much of this revival to the power of that word.

The inspired volume gradually increased by the writings of the prophets, by whose ministry religion was kept from utterly perishing. In the time of Hezekiah an extensive reformation took place. He exhorted his subjects to keep the law of God, and the Levites "taught the good knowledge of the Lord." 2 Ch. xxx, 22. Again, in the time of Josiah the book of the law, which had been lost, was found and read before him. 2 Kings xx. He was much affected by it, and caused it to be read before all the people, in the house of the Lord, by which means they were induced to enter into a covenant with God and forsake idolatry.

We may observe similar effects from the same cause in the time of Nehemiah. Ezra and his companions read the book of the law to the people. Neh. viii, 8. 9. And what contrition, what penitence, and what prayer it excited! The princes, the priests, and the Levites again made a covenant with God and sealed it.

We have briefly noticed the effects of the truth amongst the Jews themselves, let us now point out some of the effects of their being set apart for God, as it respected other countries.

The Jews formed a visible Church, "holding forth the word of life" to mankind in general. Judea seems to have been peculiarly adapted (from its central situation, and as placed between the two great kingdoms of Assyria and Egypt) to be the country of a people, who, as possessing the true religion, were to be the light of the world. The various events of the Jewish history were also calculated to call the attention of surrounding nations to them. The plagues inflicted on Egypt; the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea; the conquest of Canaan; the glory of Solomon's reign; the destruction of the Assyrian army; the dispersion of the Jews in their captivity; the exalted situation of Nehemiah, Daniel, and other characters eminent both for talents and piety; with many circumstances, equally marking the hand of a peculiar providence, would all naturally excite the attention of the world to a people so distinguished. It must sometimes have been said, "This great nation is a wise and understanding people, for what nation is there so great who hath God so nigh them.—Deut. iv. 6. We may indeed observe the effect of their situation and character incidentally shown at different times and in various ways. A mixed multitude went up with them out of Egypt. The queen of Sheba came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The king of Syria sent to Israel to have Naaman healed of the leprosy. The king of Babylon hearing of Hezekiah's miraculous recovery, sent letters to him. We occasionally hear of proselytes. How remarkable, in the view we are considering, is Nebuchadnezzar's decree! Dan. iv. Wise men came from the East to the birth of Christ. The eunuch of Queen Candace came from Ethiopia to worship at Jerusalem. All which things tend to show that the light of truth was not altogether confined to the Jews.

At length Jesus Christ, the promised deliverer, the great light of the world, the revealer of the will of God, in its most eminent sense, he of whom the word of God chiefly testifies, and by the inspiration of whose Spirit it was written, appeared at the time foretold, and at a period when the state of the world afforded many advantages for the promulgation of his Gospel.

2. *The Period since the Birth of Christ.*

Few things are more calculated to show the value of the Scriptures than Christ's attention to them during his ministry on earth. He resisted temptation by quoting them. In his discourses

he constantly appealed to them, and expressly commanded his disciples to search them. He asserted that every jot and tittle was to be fulfilled; and that heaven and earth should pass away but his words should not.

His apostles followed his steps. At the opening of their ministry on that memorable day of Pentecost, when about 3000 souls were added unto them (see Acts ii,) they brought before the Jews their own Scriptures, by which the people, being convinced of their sins, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, gladly received the word, and embraced the Gospel. The Apostles, by their own writings, completed the sacred volume, and warmly commended those who search the Scriptures, to ascertain the truth of what they preached. Thus the word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem, and the nations of the earth were converted to Christianity.

Soon, however, the doctrines of the Gospel became gradually corrupted and adulterated by the additions of men, in consequence of their neglecting the Bible; and it might easily be shown that the occasional revivals which took place, were either caused by, or accompanied with, an attention to the word. At length Popery and Mahometanism almost universally prevailed over those countries where Christianity had flourished. It was a feature of the corruption of those times which deserves our notice, that the Bible and especially the original Scriptures, were almost lost. The fountain of light being taken away, and entirely kept from the people, no wonder that darkness followed. God, however, who by his Son declared that the gates of hell should never prevail against his Church, by his providence fulfilled this declaration, and raised up those who maintained his truth even in the midst of the darkest ages.—There ever were witnesses, though often prophesying in sackcloth. In our own country Wickliffe shone as a bright light; his mind had been illuminated by the word of God; for the sake of that word he suffered much; he translated it for the benefit of his own countrymen, and many thereby received the knowledge of the truth.

That which, however, is pre-eminently and deservedly called THE REFORMATION, strikingly shows the efficacy of the word of God, in bringing men to the knowledge of the truth, and when perseveringly and steadily set before them, causing a general revival of religion.

It was not by human power or influence that Luther prevailed, but simply through the mighty energy of the pure word of God. The great truths of the Bible were gradually diffused by him. He says himself, "I had the whole body of papists to oppose. I preached, I wrote, I pressed on men's consciences the positive declarations of the word of God, but I used not a particle of force. It is not I, I repeat it, but the *divine word, which has done every thing*."

The reformation in England proceeded in the same way. The reformers were anxious on one hand to translate, recommend, and circulate the Scriptures, and on the other hand, the people in general eagerly received the invaluable record in their own tongue. A copy of the newly translated Bible was directed to be fixed to a desk, and placed in all the churches for them, and they assembled in crowds either to read it, or hear it read.

It would too much encroach upon our limits to take a survey of the present state of the world. But it may, I think, be safely asserted, that just in proportion as the Bible is circulated, received, and devoutly read, just so much the fruits of righteousness are yielded to the glory of God and the good of man. In those lands where the Bible is little known, there Papal darkness remains: and where the Bible is unknown, there Idolatry and Mahometanism, with their constant attendants, cruelty and lust, universally prevail. We may also remark, that whatever true knowledge of God is found, in those countries where false religion is generally received, or true religion is corrupted, may justly be attributed to the Bible. This is particularly evident in the case both of Popery and Mahometanism.

The signs of the present times are in many respects peculiar and favourable. There is a growing regard to the sacred volume, as the only standard of doctrine and practice. The word of God is translating into all languages, dispersing among all people, and foreigners unite with us in promoting this great object. We see marks of the fall of Popery and Mahometanism—of the calling of the Jews—and of the word of the Lord going forth from Jerusalem—we see a spirit of union in the Christian Church unknown for centuries before, and we know that when the disciples of Christ "are all one, the world will believe" his divine mission, John xvii, 21. The attention of Christians is peculiarly directed to promote the spreading of the Gospel, and a general spirit of prayer is excited amongst them—All denominations of Christians are sending out Missionaries —God has given this country extensive maritime power, apparently for the very purpose of sending Christian ambassadors to all the inhabitants of the world, Isa. xviii, 1—3.—Nor have exertions been wholly in vain. Both Jews and Gentiles have been brought to the knowledge of Christ, as the first fruits of the harvest which is to follow.

Thus we see all the preparations going forward and extending for some great work—the success indeed has been small at present, and may yet continue to be so. It may please God to show the inefficiency of other means, and then peculiarly to manifest his own power, in giving an unexpected blessing to the exertions of his people. He may allow us to prepare the various channels, and may send down a few drops to keep up our hopes; but it will be evidently his own doing, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," Hab. ii, 14. "He will make bare his holy arm in the sight of all nations, before all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God," Isa. lii.—We see enough in the prophecies and promises of the Bible, and in the present success also, to teach us to renounce all dependence upon ourselves, to animate us to the most persevering prayers, and to excite our most active exertions in the great cause of the universal diffusion of the truth.

It will have been seen from the passages of Scripture which have been quoted, that we are not left to mere conjecture as to future times. The historical relation of events, indeed in the Scriptures, has long ceased; but, as Edwards has observed,* "there are two ways wherein the Scriptures give account of the events by which the work of redemption is carried on; one is by history and another by prophecy: and in one or the other of these ways we have contained in the Scriptures an account of this work from the beginning to the end, an account of the whole chain of great events by which it has been carried on from the foundation soon after the fall of man, to the finishing of it at the end of the world. And it is to be observed, where the Scripture is wanting in one of these ways it is made up in the other. Where Scripture History fails, there Prophecy takes place; so that the account is still carried on, and the chain is not broken till we come to the very last link of it, in the consummation of all things."

Let us, then, consider, Thirdly,

The prospect which the Bible affords us of the ultimate Triumph of Divine Truth.

We pretend not to prophecy; nor can we interpret beforehand those prophecies which are at present unfulfilled. But, in general, we are warranted to expect the happy conquest of the truth of God, over anti-christian oppression, and error of every kind. There is a promised period when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ. The spiritual house of God, far more glorious than the splendid temple of Solomon, is erecting. We doubt not, when the building shall be completed, the necessity of all the preparation of materials, the removal of rubbish, the hewing of wood, the squaring of stones, and the erection of the scaffolding (however unsightly it may now appear) will be fully perceived. It will be manifested that an end, now not alto-

* See Edwards's History of Redemption. See also Brown's Chronology of Redemption.

gether understood, was promoted by the inexplicable scenery of past ages, and the awful dispensations of present times. It will be seen that all had a tendency to promote the glory of God, and the welfare of those who obey him.

In this view, there is a splendid object of hope set before us; "the Lord hasten it in his time." What may precede it, we know not. Perhaps, while there is much for us to expect, our fears may sometimes be excited as to the means by which our hopes will be realized. Seldom does any great event take place, but it follows some awful judgment. It seems necessary that the fire of the Lord should devour his adversaries, before he comes to display his glory.

Two things are at least clear to us:—our duty to serve God, and the happiness of his servants. We are also cheered by the prospect of the growing increase of their number, till—"all the ends of the earth remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations worship before him."

In every event, also, whatever commotion takes place in the world, the servants of God are safe. "Though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, the Lord of Hosts is with them, the God of Jacob is their refuge." It is their great desire that the kingdom of God should come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That *kingdom*, they know will come; and that *will* in every thing shall be done; and their happiness, being thus secured shall be accomplished.

If it be said, that there is now but little prospect that all nations, whom God has made shall come and worship before him, whilst so great a portion of mankind is given to idolatry and sin; the objection will have no weight, when we consider the power of the Almighty, and the first promulgation of Christianity. We do not at all pretend to fix any precise time when the universal reception of the Gospel will take place, but the word of God seems to lead us to look for rapid and unexpected success.—"As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Isa. lxvi, 8. "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation." Isa. lx, 22.

We have seen the "angel fly in the midst of heaven, having THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, kindred, and tongue and people." Rev. xiv, 6. Now we know that the "word of the Lord shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish the thing whereto he doth send it." It will be found, as it ever has been, mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong holds of Satan."

We may, then, in the confidence of faith, look forward and refresh our minds by contemplating the scenes of happiness which even the lower world will exhibit, when all, or the greater part of mankind, shall become true disciples of Jesus Christ. Nor will the Christian reader be disposed to treat this as a visionary idea. We have prophecies which teach us, promises which encourage us, and precepts which direct us, to hope and pray, and work for such a time.—And though it is a subject in the consideration of which, we may need caution, yet, as Dr. Buchanan remarks, "it is evident from the sure word of prophecy, that there will be a long time of general holiness and peace, which will succeed to the present time of vice and misery; (probably 1000 years) during which, righteousness will be as common as wickedness is now: and further, that this period is at hand, even at the door."

We may believe, that apparently insurmountable obstacles will then be wonderfully romoved: "every valley exalted, every hill brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain." The heathen, forsaking dumb idols, shall worship the Lord their God, and receive Jesus Christ as his Son from heaven. The Jews, perhaps restored to their own land, shall submit to their true though long rejected Messiah. Becoming as eminent for holiness, as they now are for worldliness, they shall be patterns of piety to all around them, so that "many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem—and in those days it shall come to pass, that ten

men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." Thus, "the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved."

Let us endeavour to consider the consequences that will result from the great mass of mankind embracing the true religion, and being influenced by that love of God, and of their fellow creatures, which comprehends and fulfils the whole law.

Our Lord's prayer for his disciples shall be completely answered, they all shall be one, even as he and his Father are one. The increase of the communion of saints will be a delightful effect of this state. The identity of interest, the oneness of mind, the sympathy of feeling and the interchange of kindness, which so peculiarly mark the character and conduct of real Christians one towards another, extended and amplified as they will then be, must produce a vast accession to human happiness.

Those will be called to places of authority who are distinguished by their wisdom and piety, and they will hold their situations without envy on one side, or pride or tyranny on the other. *Kings* will, indeed, be fathers; and *subjects*, children, and brethren, living together in unity. "All the officers will be peace—all the exactors righteousness—Ephraim will not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim."

How many things which now distress us, would, in such a case, be banished. "Nation would no longer lift up the sword against nation, neither would men learn war any more. Their swords would be beaten into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks, and every one would dwell safely under his own vine and fig-tree." What a blessing to a place is any one man, whose heart is filled with Christian love; and when many, if not all, are thus influenced, how will evil of every kind be diminished! Supposing that many natural evils, such as, sickness, disease, poverty, unfruitful seasons, and things of this kind should still continue, how much of that which is afflicting about them would be removed, by general and mutual aid, compassion, and sympathy!

Each individual applying himself with industry and diligence to the peculiar duties of his station, how prosperous, how peaceful, how happy would every nation be! Population would be amazingly increased: "the waste and desolate places would even be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants."

Instead of backbiting and malice, wrath and revenge, that Christian Charity, which thinketh no evil, ever active, yet ever humble, ever meek, yet ever firm, would universally prevail. We should have no reason to distrust those with whom we were unacquainted, but every soul would be a kindred brother, and all helping one another forward in the way to eternal life.

We may easily suppose, that in such a state God will bless the earth, and the labours of man, with abundant fruitfulness. We see the effect of Christianity on Europe even now. "The prodigious superiority," says one, "which Europe possesses over Africa, and Asia, is chiefly to be attributed to this cause. It is the possession of a religion which comprehends the seeds of endless improvement; which maintains an incessant struggle with whatever is barbarous, selfish, and inhuman; which, by unveiling futurity, clothes morality with the sanction of a divine law, and harmonizes utility and virtue in every combination of events, and in every stage of existence; a religion which, by affording the most just and sublime conceptions of the Deity, and of the moral relations of man, has given birth at once to the loftiest speculation and the most childlike humility, uniting the inhabitants of the globe into one family, and in the bonds of a common salvation. It is this religion which, rising upon us like a finer sun, has quickened moral vegetation, and replenished Europe with talents, virtues, and exploits, which, in spite of its physical disadvantages, have rendered it a paradise, the delight and wonder of the world." When Christianity becomes the universal reli-

gion, we may well expect a universal paradise over the whole earth, the antepast of an eternal paradise in heaven.

At such a glorious time, let us conceive how vast will be human happiness. Christian joy will manifest itself in gratitude. One continued song of human praise and thanksgiving ascending from every heart, will go up daily as most acceptable incense unto God. Then indeed will be heard, even upon earth, "the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, saying, Allelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Who, then, will not fervently pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The Scriptures, however, show us, Rev. xx, 7, &c. that this happy period will at length expire, and that Satan will be loosed again, for a little season, after which will come the general judgment. In that day alone, shall we be able fully to estimate the amazing worth and importance of the Bible. Against *the wicked* it will be an unexpected witness, whose testimony will forever decide their condition. Its precepts will show their transgressions; its invitations, their utter inexcusableness; its threatenings, their eternal ruin. Who can tell what it will be to have the whole sacred volume testifying against us? But, on the other hand, the Bible changes its voice towards *the righteous*, and to them it will speak *nothing* but consolation. It will show that their guilt is done away in the Saviour. Its threatenings will not reach them, its declarations will acquit them, its promises will secure their eternal bliss. Let us farther consider the particulars of that day as they are sublimely described in the Scripture.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead are raised. —The Son of man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and he sits upon the throne of his glory, and before him all nations are gathered. Every one must give account of himself to God. O how can we now know what will then be the mind of our judge? The Bible declares it to us! But the judge begins to divide all mankind into two classes, the wicked to go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. How then, while we have time before us, can we ascertain the rule of his judgment! The Bible discovers it to us! But, see, the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up—when all is giving way, when the world is passing from under our feet, on what can we fix our hopes that is permanent and abiding. —"Heaven and earth shall pass away," says Christ, "but my words shall not pass away.—He that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

We will conclude with two observations.

1. It has been shown, that in every age, there have been those who knew, loved, and served their Creator, and we have seen that they alone will be eternally blessed. There are such characters now living. How important then for ourselves is the enquiry, do I belong to the number? No question is of greater consequence to us. O let us not shrink from it, let us not throw it aside, or put it off, but rather sift it to the bottom, for if we are wrong, it is not yet too late to amend. In pursuing this enquiry, no book can give us such genuine information as the word of God.

2. What a wonderful book is the Bible, which through the divine blessing, has effected so much good in the world, which declares to us such awfully important truths, and which opens such prospects before us? Let us be thankful that the inestimable treasure, preserved safe through so many ages and so many dangers, is still in our hands; let us see that it has its full effect upon our own hearts, and do every thing we can to disperse it "unto all people, nations and languages, that dwell in all the earth."

PREFACE

TO

TREATISE ON PRAYER.

The acceptance which it has pleased God to give to the "*Scripture Help*," and the testimonies which the writer has received of benefit derived from that work, have induced him to endeavour to call the attention of Christians, and particularly the young, (for whom he wishes to be considered as especially writing,) to another most important means of grace.

It seemed also peculiarly needful to press the duty of prayer now; for it appears to the writer to be one of the dangers of the present reviving state of the Church, that men gain knowledge without corresponding feelings; they are tempted to make a profession of religion, and talk about it, while, it is to be feared, the more retired and all-important duties of devout prayer, meditation, self-examination, and reading the Scriptures, are neglected.

He has felt a personal advantage in his former Treatise, from its imposing on him an additional obligation to the study of the Word of God. He hopes for a similar benefit in the present publication.

His various public engagements have indeed left him little leisure for a work of such importance; but it appeared to him better to do good, even though it be done in an imperfect manner, than not to do it at all.

In a treatise on that which has so often engaged the attention of Christian writers, new sentiments can neither be desired nor expected. The direction—"ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls," is well applicable here. The writer willingly availed himself of the ideas suggested by any former author.

He would, however, observe, that it is not the knowledge of the duty, but the grace of prayer which is the great thing that we should desire to attain. He has often had occasion, in the course of writing this book, to feel that it is much easier to know how to pray, than really to pray. The grace of prayer is a divine gift of far more importance than the mere knowledge of all parts of this duty, or the ability to perform it before man.

If some are disposed to think, that he has in any instance set the standard of devotion too high, he would say, that he has endeavoured to follow the Scriptures; and though he feels that this necessarily often condemns both himself and Christians in general, it appeared his duty not to lower the standard on that account, but rather to explain it, and press it the more, that the perfection of the rule might lead himself and his readers more simply to the Saviour for pardon, peace, and strength. Some may, indeed, on the other hand, think, that by not setting the standard high enough, he has often proved his own want of devotional feeling. He is ready here to submit to those of more experience in the Christian life.

It would have been easy to have enlarged many parts; but the object was to bring forward only the most obvious and useful observations that occurred.

Though prayer is that duty which especially declares the guilt and weakness of man, and the grace and power of God; yet there is danger in pressing any positive duty, and particularly that of prayer, lest we should in any measure foster and encourage that self-righteousness which is so natural to the human mind. The writer has endeavoured to guard against this evil. Without prayer, indeed, no man possesses spiritual life; yet we are not saved by our prayers; the ability to pray is rather a part of that salvation which Jesus Christ has obtained for us.

It may be thought by some, that parts of this work are little more than a collection or bringing together of texts of Scripture. This will not, it is presumed, be an objection to the majority of his readers; and it may be said, if it need an excuse, that the author felt, that when he could quote a passage of Scripture in support of any sentiment, he then knew that he was on secure ground. The Scriptures are also very full on this subject; so that an arrangement of those passages which relate only to prayer, would form no inconsiderable volume.

The congregation attending in the afternoon at Wheeler Chapel, Spital Fields, will remember the leading outline of a considerable part of the following Treatise, as coming in the course of sermons which the author preached to them on the subject of prayer. He now affectionately submits to their attention, in a more enlarged state from the press, those motives and directions for this duty which he delivered to them from the pulpit.

The author ventures to suggest to heads of families, that parts of this work might furnish suitable reading for family instruction on Sundays.

If the reader should obtain any benefit from this work, and be excited to pray more constantly and devoutly, the writer would earnestly ask an interest in those prayers, that he himself may live in the practice of that duty which he has been endeavouring to teach others. May every reader also join him in entreating the Author and Giver of every good gift, to grant his blessing to this attempt to induce others to pray more continually and more fervently; to aim at living in abiding communion with the Father of Spirits. E. B.

Salisbury Square, Nov. 18th, 1819.

TREATISE ON PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

On the Nature and the Duty of Prayer.

Men in general think it an honour to be admitted into the company of those who are distinguished by their rank, their power, or their attainments. They feel it a privilege to converse with a man of the first consequence in the state, a man eminent in wisdom or knowledge, or the monarch of a mighty empire. A Christian justly reckons it no small privilege to be permitted for a season, to associate with a person of peculiar piety. And if, while the greatest good may be obtained from a distinguished person, there be only a limited time in which we can go to him, the importance of using an opportunity that is offered, is evidently greatly increased. If we can say "now the way of access is open, but it will soon be closed; now you may hold converse, and get intimately acquainted with him; you may obtain all you want; you may secure a lasting interest in his affections; he has invited you to come to him, and you will never have this privilege offered again: surely, no other argument need be urged, to induce a man wanting his help to go to him, without delay."

When the Lord of Glory dwelt on earth, we often read of the great multitudes who assembled together and crowded around him, to see and hear him. On one occasion, we find even a rich man, Zaccheus, unable to approach him, and climbing a tree to have a transient glimpse at so remarkable a character. Had we lived at that time, and possessed any thing of our present knowledge, we should doubtless have thought it a high honour to be in his company, and, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus, and hear his words.

This privilege was counted the more valuable in seasons of difficulty. When any were in sickness, or danger, and believed that if they could see our Lord he would help them, they then desired his presence with peculiar earnestness. When Lazarus is dying, then his sisters send a special message to their Lord. When the disciples are in the storm, they awaken him, saying, "Carest thou not that we perish?" When the people are sick, they break through the roof of a dwelling to come to him; or press through the crowd to touch the hem of his garment.

It is the *nature* of prayer, that it gives to needy and sinful men, in the limited time of this life, every day, yes, every hour, this great privilege of access to the King of kings and Lord of lords, to the Most High and the Most Holy, and this with the utmost freedom and confidence; the access not merely of a servant to a master; or a subject to a king: but of a child to a tender parent.

Prayer is, then, a holy intercourse with God.—"It is," as the martyr Bradford expresses it, "a simple, unfeigned, humble, and ardent offering of the heart before God, wherein we either ask things needful, or give thanks for benefits received." Acceptable prayer is the desire of the heart offered up to God through the influence of his Spirit, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, for things according to his will, and in confidence that he hears us and will answer us. There is no prayer without the exercise of holy and suitable dispositions and affections. "The true worshippers," says our Lord, "shall wor-

ship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Prayer is not the mere posture of the body.—A man may kneel till he wear out the stones; like the Mahomedans, he may put himself into every variety of posture, throw himself on the earth and lie in the dust; like Ahab, he may put on sackcloth and ashes; or, like the monks of modern times, kneel till his knees become horny, and yet never pray at all.

It is not the mere expression of the mouth.—A man may repeat a hundred times in a day that comprehensive and affecting prayer which our Lord has taught us to use; or he may *say*, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth after thee," and yet not offer up one prayer unto God.

It is not the mere invention of the mind.—Many have a peculiar gift of prayer in this respect, and can pour out fluently, perspicuously, and at length, a form of words; but, both the mind and the tongue may be thus employed, while the heart neither feels the sentiments expressed, nor longs for the blessings implored.

Nor is the mere act of joining in family, social, or public worship, acceptable prayer. Uniting with others, in the most earnest petitions, where your own heart is unmoved will avail you nothing.

All these things may be as the mere husk and shell without the kernel; the body without the spirit. God expects the desire of the heart. Your devotions should be a sacred bond knitting the soul unto God, a holy converse with him.

Dr. Watts thus expresses himself on this subject:—"When a holy soul comes before God, he has much more to say than merely to beg. He tells his God what a sense he has of the divine attributes; and what high esteem he pays to his majesty, his wisdom, his power and his mercy. He talks with him about the works of creation, and stands wrapt up in wonder. He talks about the grace and mystery of redemption, and is yet more filled with admiration and joy. He talks of all the affairs of nature, grace, and glory. He speaks of his works of providence, of love, and vengeance, in this and the future world. Infinite and glorious are the subjects of this holy communion between God and his saints."

Mrs. More observes, "Prayer is a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. St. Paul represents it to include our adoration of his perfections; our acknowledgment of the wisdom of his dispensations, and of our obligations for his benefits, providential and spiritual; the avowal of our entire dependence on him, and of our absolute subjection to him; the declaration of our faith in him; the expression of our devotedness to him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences, for succour in our distress, for a blessing on our undertakings, for the direction of our conduct, and the success of our affairs."*

"Prayer," says the same writer, "is the application of want to Him who only can relieve it. It is the urgency of poverty, the prostration of humility, the fervency of penitence, the confidence of truth. It is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but compunction of soul. It is the "Lord save us, we perish," of drowning Peter; the cry of faith to the ear of mercy."*

This is acceptable prayer. But how often are our devotions a mere form to satisfy our conscience? We know it is our duty to pray; we know that none go to heaven but men of prayer; we have been taught to pray in our youth, and therefore we go through the outward form; but is it not too often without the inward motion and desire of the heart towards God? Let us remember, that the mere form is not only unprofitable to the soul, but brings guilt upon it; and when trusted in, is a dangerous delusion. It may gain us a religious name in the world; it may pacify an alarming conscience for the moment; but it gains nothing from God. Our Lord says, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with

* See Essay on St. Paul, vol. ii, p. 227.

their lips, but their heart is far from me;" and what follows?—"in vain do they worship me."

From this description of the nature of prayer, it must be obvious, that with the gift of "the spirit of grace and supplications," two things are essentially necessary to enable us really to pray.

1. *The knowledge of our wants.*—As the needy only will stoop to ask for alms, so a real, deep, and abiding sense of our indigence is the first spring of a true and earnest desire to obtain help from God. The prodigal son thought not of returning to his father till reduced to wretchedness and misery. When David says, "I am poor and needy," he then earnestly prays, "Make haste unto me, O God, thou art my help and my deliverer." While we think we can help ourselves, and get through our difficulties by our own means, we are little disposed to pray to God. The Laodicean Church could not be much in the spirit of real prayer, however it might abound in the outward form, when our Lord had to say of it, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Come to the throne of grace to get, and not to give. Bring your wants, and not your fulness. And if you have no feeling of your spiritual poverty and necessity, let your first prayer be for this feeling.

2. *Faith in the being and goodness of God.* The prodigal thought on his father's riches and bounty, and returned to him. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." He who has not a scriptural knowledge of God, or who thinks him a hard and austere master, will never feel disposed rightly to approach him. It is faith, the gift of God, realizing the views given us in the Bible of the immensity, power, wisdom, all-sufficiency and goodness of God, of his being ever present, and of the way of access by Jesus Christ, which excites the heart to draw near to him in full confidence that he hears us, and loves us, and will help us. And what duty can be more delightful than thus to come to God as an almighty, compassionate, and reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, in the full conviction that he loves us, and, because he loves us, will deny us nothing that is for our good?

The nature of prayer is, however, better known by experience than by any description. One who had just begun to be in earnest about religion said, "I was most affected with the difference which I found in my prayers. I had never thought of doing any thing more than outwardly repeating a form; but I was surprised to find how God enabled me in my private devotions, earnestly to ask, in the name of his Son, those mercies which I needed, and really to desire those things, which I had before only formally expressed."

Many arguments might be urged to show the *duty of prayer:* but we will confine ourselves to some plain ones.

Prayer is *a natural and reasonable act for human beings.* The first feeling of the mind, and the natural expression of that feeling in any sudden and alarming emergency and distress, is an act of prayer to God. Jonah i, 5, 6. It is natural and reasonable, for man is not an independent being; he is created by another, and he is altogether dependent on his Creator. It is our truest wisdom to know, and our best interest to act upon this truth. It is our highest happiness to delight in him, by whose skill, power, and love, we have every faculty given, and continued to us. Prayer is the simplest and plainest expression of dependence, and the most obvious way of obtaining help from God our Creator.—Hence men in all ages and in all nations, have in one way or other offered up prayer.

Prayer is *an act of homage, justly due from us to the great Governor of all.* We thereby adore him, who only has a right to our adoration. It is a special part of that honour and service to which he has every possible claim. He ought to be acknowledged as the Author and Giver of every good gift. Thereby we glorify his wisdom, as knowing all things, his power, as able to extricate us from every difficulty, his goodness, as willing to assist us, his all-sufficiency, to meet

every want, his mercy, as pitying our misery, and his forbearance, in pardoning all our sins. In short, what attribute of God does not prayer acknowledge and honour, and how manifestly does it tend to maintain a constant, and lively, and general impression of his supreme excellence and glory.

God has expressly commanded us to pray to him. Our Lord says, "Ask and it shall be given you." He declares, "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." St. Paul also exhorts, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands. Testimonies to this effect might be multiplied. The great God, then, that made heaven and earth, and before whom you must stand in Judgment, plainly requires you to worship him.

The relations by which God has revealed himself to us, show this duty. He is a Father, and gives us "the spirit of adoption, to cry, Abba, Father." Children should not go to their father to ask of him a supply of their wants, and to tell him all that they feel and enjoy. Jesus Christ is the way of access to God; a Mediator to interpose in our behalf, and a High Priest and Intercessor to offer up our supplications: the Holy Spirit also assists our prayers, making intercession for us. These relations are specially revealed for our use, and are mainly important with reference to prayer. A peculiar title therefore given to God is, "O Thou that hearest prayer."

There are severe threatenings against those who neglect this duty. The Psalmist says, "Pour out thy wrath upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name." Daniel (ix, 13, 14,) ascribes the evil that came on the Jews to their neglect of prayer. Those were to be cut off, "who turned back from the Lord, and those that have not sought the Lord." It is the character given of the wicked, "who are far from God," that they "call not upon the Lord;" and of the hypocrite, that "he will not always call upon God." He may, perhaps, in a time of trouble, seek God's help; but he neglects it as his daily duty.

The duty of prayer may be farther proved from *the practice of holy persons.* I need not do more than enumerate those of old. Abraham, Gen. xviii, 22—32; xxi, 33; Isaac, Gen. xxiv, 63; Jacob, Gen. xxxii, 24, 28; Hosea, xii, 3, 4; Moses, Exod. xxxiv, 28; Jabez, 1 Chron. iv, 10; David, Ps. lv, 16, 17; Elijah, James v, 17; Daniel, ch. vi, 10; Paul, Acts ix, 11; Rom. i, 9; Eph. i, 15, 16; Phil. i, 3, 4; 2 Tim. i, 3; Peter, Acts x, 9; with many others: or those holy women, Rebecca, Gen. xxv, 22; Hannah, 1 Sam. i, 13, 14; Anna, Luke ii, 38; and others to show that they lived in prayer. And why is their devotion recorded? not for their glory, but as examples for us. The man of much prayer resembles those Patriarchs of old, who "walked with God," and has something of their privileges, to whom God manifested himself in the flesh, and with whom he conversed on earth. Not to dwell on these, let us look to our Lord himself, whose example is especially set before us to be followed. Few parts of his character are more plainly exhibited, than his constant regard of this duty. The reader is referred to the following passages: Matt. xiv. 23; Mark i, 35; vi, 46; Luke v, 16, 26; vi, 12; xxii, 39—45; Heb. v, 7; vii, 25.

Prayer is *also an indispensable means to be used in order to obtain spiritual blessings.* The good things of this life are given indeed indiscriminately to good or bad men: God thus showing how little value we ought to set on those things which the wicked often abundantly possess. But grace and pardon, mercy and salvation, are promised expressly to those who pray. "If thou shalt pray unto God, he shall be favourable unto thee." "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee." No excellencies can compensate for the want of prayer. In fact, it lies at the root of the real benefit of all the other gifts of God to man.

But religion is in a low state in the heart of that man on whom prayer must be urged as a duty. It ought ever to be considered as the greatest of all mercies that we are permitted to pray to God, and assured that "every one that asketh receiveth." We shall, therefore, in the following chapter, consider prayer rather as a privilege than as a duty.

CHAPTER II.

The Privilege of Prayer.

"The true happiness of every Christian," says Bishop Wilkins, "does properly consist in his spiritual communion with God." Prayer is, then, a necessary part of the Christian's happiness, for it brings him into the presence of God, and is the most direct act of communion with him.

Every one that prays aright, can adopt David's expression, "It is good for me to draw near to God." It is pleasant, it is honourable, it is advantageous. If I have riches, they may or may not be good for me. If I have human knowledge, power, eloquence, talent, and earthly glory, or any of the good things of this life, they may or may not be good for me: but if I have the grace of prayer, the heart to draw near to God, it is unmixed, unqualified good. It is certainly and unquestionably good for me.

Consider some of *the advantages* of prayer.

Prayer is *the means which God has appointed for you to obtain every good, and escape every evil.*—It has pleased him to appoint this means for various, wise, and holy purposes; and especially that we may acknowledge and glorify his attributes; that we may see our dependence on him, and prove our obedience to him. There is no evil that you may now suffer, or that you may expect to suffer, which prayer is not the appointed means to alleviate or avert. Our Lord declared, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Greater blessings than we can think of may thus be obtained. "Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel!"

We are certain of obtaining what we ask in faith, according to God's will.—The numerous promises made to faithful prayer fully confirm this remark. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." You may labour for riches, and lay by money year after year, and after every care your money may be lost, and you die poor; or it may bring you trouble and sorrow, rather than any advantage. You may pursue the pleasures or favour of the world, and live miserable and die despised. But if you seek the blessings of God in fervent prayer, you cannot be disappointed. This has been the testimony of every servant of God from the beginning. How differently men reason about earthly and spiritual things. If a great, and faithful, and gracious monarch were to promise riches, pleasures, or honours, to those who come to him, his court would soon be crowded; men would anxiously ask, "what has he promised? how may I go to him?" But God himself has earnestly invited us to come to him, has promised to supply all our wants, and to give us durable riches and righteousness. It is the solemn declaration of Jesus Christ to his disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." You may not indeed obtain the first time you ask; the promise gives no assurance that you shall. St. Paul had "a thorn in the flesh," and besought the Lord thrice, or frequently, before he was heard. You may not obtain the very thing which you ask; but asking aright, you will obtain that which will fully satisfy the spiritual mind. St. Paul's thorn in the flesh was not removed, but he was enabled to take pleasure in his infirmities. No prayers offered up aright will ever be made in vain.

The privilege of prayer was *purchased for us at the costly price of the blood of Jesus Christ*, and therefore we may easily imagine what a great and vast advantage it must be, and how excellent is that liberty of access unto God which was thus obtained. Souls now in eternal ruin are not privileged to pray. They have irrevocably lost this good. The fallen angels have no way of access to God. Jesus "took not on him the nature of angels." Shall we then slight or despise the distinguishing privilege of our present life?

Prayer is *a satisfactory evidence of*

our having obtained the saving grace of God. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It is the breath of the spiritual life in the soul. Whatever has life must breathe; and if the life be strong, it will breathe freely. If prayer be faint, weak, and disordered, the person is not in full life and health; if there be no prayer, there is no spiritual life at all; the first mark of it is, "Behold, he prayeth:" and the last account of one is his prayer, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." It is to the spiritual Church the promise belongs —"I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication." If you have a fervent spirit of prayer, you have a sure evidence of being born again; of the life of God begun in your soul. When you can feel with David, "my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary:" then you may also say with humble yet believing confidence, "O God, thou art my God."

Prayer gains for us spiritual strength. —It is that singular duty in which every grace is exercised, every sin opposed, every blessing obtained, the whole soul revived, strengthened, and invigorated for the Christian race. Just in proportion to your prayers, so is your holiness, so is your usefulness. The praying Christian is the strong, the thriving Christian, "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." As the naturally weak ivy, which, if it had no support, would only grovel on the earth, by adhering to some neighbouring tree, or building, and entwining itself about it, thus grows and flourishes, and rises higher and higher; and the more the winds blow and the tempests beat against it, the closer it adheres, and the nearer it clings, and the faster its fibres embrace that which supports it, and it remains uninjured: just so the Christian naturally weak, by prayer connects himself with the Almighty; and the more dangers and difficulties beset him, the more closely they unite him to his God; he reaches towards, and leans upon, and clings to him, and is strengthened with divine strength. High is the privilege of prayer, which turns our very wants to our advantage, leading us by them into a constant intercourse with God, and keeping us in a spiritual and heavenly state of mind.

By prayer we obtain true peace of mind, that peace to which those who never pray are utter strangers.—This peace is a calm and entire resting upon God for the supply of every necessity, of body and soul, for time and for eternity. It is a casting all our burden, whatever it be, upon a kind, compassionate, Almighty friend, who willingly sustains it, and relieves and comforts us. "Casting all your care on him, for he careth for you." Let the Christian follow the Apostle's direction, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," and he may fully expect the effect which the Apostle describes—"and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." How calm and composed may he be, amid all the storms and distractions of this world, who has daily and hourly communion with the Creator, Ruler, and Preserver of all things! The Christian falls below his true happiness in this life, if he does not enjoy constant peace of mind. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

Prayer is especially *advantageous in the time of trouble.*—Even those who neglect God altogether at other times, are often then compelled to apply to him, and even in such a case he has heard and accepted them. But with a peculiarly filial confidence may those approach unto him, when they are in trouble, whose habit of mind, whose continual practice, whose whole life, is a drawing near to God. The command and the promise belong to them, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Indeed, what Christian has not found in his own experience, the truth of the declaration, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." When no other ear could hear but his, no other arm save, no other pow-

er relieve or help; when we were destitute and almost in despair, then his ear heard, and through his mercy we were delivered. Prayer, like the precious metal, comes most pure from the heated furnace. Are you depressed under your guilt, your weakness, your ignorance, or your ingratitude? You may spread your distress, as Hezekiah did his letter, before God, and you need not fear but that God will help you: and what a comfort it is that we can never come unseasonably to him. A great man or a friend may be so circumstanced that we cannot interrupt him, or he will soon be wearied by repeated application, or he may be so far off that we cannot get at him; but our God is ever nigh unto us—he is always with us; "a very present help in trouble." Other friends, if willing, may not be able to help us—but he has both the will and the power to give the greatest blessings. "Even our guilt, when confessed, becomes a plea for relief; and the worst condition that can be, the strongest reason to pray; all that is given, being given, not for our merits, but for Christ's sake." The following affecting anecdote is told us of a poor negro woman. She was a poor slave in the West Indies, and was forbidden by her master to attend public worship, and threatened with severe punishment if she did go: the only reply she made, was, "I must tell the Lord that;" a reply that so affected her owner, that he no longer refused her liberty to go. What a view does this give us of the blessedness of prayer, that a poor and friendless outcast may thereby obtain the aid of the great Governor of the universe!

In prayer we *enjoy the presence of God.*—"Draw nigh to God," says St. James, "and he will draw nigh to you." The devout soul, having found in the solitude of the closet the presence of God, is glad to withdraw itself from the distraction of the world, and retire to hold converse with him in secret. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When shall I come and appear before God?" The Saviour assured his disciples, "he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." There is an experience, therefore, of this presence, into which only those who love Christ can enter. Jeremiah seems to feel the the loss of it, when in so affecting a way, he exclaims, "O thou hope of Israel, thou Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?"

Prayer *prepares us for the enjoyment of God hereafter.*—He who has had this heavenly intercourse on earth, and has here been able to say "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," is prepared to enter into the blissful society above. God is not a stranger to him, he has long known him; his Saviour is his tried and constant friend. And just as a man who has been continually experiencing the bounty and goodness of a friend whom he has never seen, will rejoice in beholding his face, so it will be to the devout believer. He will enter heaven with the conviction, "In thy presence is fulness of joy."

The devout believer then, is the only *truly happy* man. What a delightful life does he live, whose prayers afford him constant communion with God! No fears and anxieties about future things need distract him, nor present difficulties and burdens weigh him down. He may calmly, steadily, and cheerfully pass through all the varieties of this life, living in the most exalted and yet endearing friendship with his Maker, having a constant support, and a hidden but solid joy from intercourse with him, possessing an ample resource in every circumstance here below, and an assured expectation of everlasting felicity with Him at whose right hand "there are pleasures for evermore." Let the happiness of the life of devotion induce you diligently to seek divine grace, to enable you to say with David, "I give myself unto prayer."

These and many other things which might be mentioned, are the advantages of prayer. But men err in two ways concerning this privilege: some wholly neglect their prayers, and some trust in them.

Some neglect prayer, and this on various grounds. They say, *God knows*

what I want without my asking, and he is too wise and too good to need my information in order to relieve me. This should be an argument to raise your faith and hope, and not to hinder your prayers. God is indeed wise, infinitely wise; and, being so wise, he has in his word directed you to make known your wants unto him by prayer. His knowledge is one reason why you *should* pray to him, and his goodness another, why you may confidently apply to him. Will you pretend to be wiser than he is? Whatever his design may be in it, your duty is clear —to obey his will. He knows when you will die, and might support you without food, and yet you daily eat. Remember that "it may be agreeable to perfect wisdom, to grant that to our prayers which it would not have been agreeable to the same wisdom to have given us without praying for." What if prayer be his plan for making you humble, dependent, devout, believing, and thankful? In short, for impressing you with a sense and feeling of your wants, and for bringing you to a proper state of mind to receive his blessing? But whatever his design may be, it is your highest wisdom and interest to follow his directions.

A similar objection is, that *God is unchangeable, and prayer will not alter nor reverse his purposes.*—We do not say that prayer really changes the purpose of God, though it may be sometimes so expressed in condescension to our infirmities: but we say his course of dealing is quite different with those who pray, and those who do not. We may think, indeed, that we are drawing God nearer to us, when we in truth draw nearer to him, as a person with a boat-hook which he fixes to the shore is ready to think when he draws the boat, that he is moving the land towards him, when in fact he himself is coming nearer the land. But you quite mistake the true design of this perfection of God, if you think it should keep you from praying. The unchangeableness of God, so far from being an argument against prayer, is the reason why you should pray, and secure to yourself the fulfillment of his promises. What are the purposes of God? are they known or secret? If *known*, as if he has threatened judgment, prayer may avert it. Look at the example of Nineveh, and see the effect of the Ninevites humbling themselves before God, though God had threatened, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Prayer arrests the judgment. Or, if he has made promises, it is still our duty to pray that they may be accomplished. When Daniel knew that the return of the Jews at a certain time was decreed of God, it only stirred him up to pray more earnestly for the blessing. You cannot tell what the *secret* purposes of God are; but you know that God has appointed prayer as the means of obtaining good and averting evil. If you neglect the means which he has directed you to use, you have no reason to expect the blessing which you desire: but if you are induced by his grace to use the means, it is a good sign that you are likely to obtain the desired end. Remember, then, that though there be "no variableness nor shadow of turning" with him, yet the means are ordained as well as the effect, and pray to gain that which God ordains to be obtained by prayer. Jesus Christ himself prayed, and commanded you to pray; and an excuse drawn from the unchangeableness of God will never avail you in answer to a plain command, sanctioned by such an example, and especially when there are such great and evident advantages in obtaining your desires through prayer.

Others say, I *cannot pray*. Indeed you cannot of yourself, and this is your guilt and your sin; but you may pray by the help of God, and I purpose to show how "to them that have no might God increaseth strength." But have you ever tried to pray? have you ever asked God to enable you to pray? Many children, when a hard lesson is given them, say to their teachers, I cannot learn it; yet by trying, and attending to the instructions they receive, the hardest lessons are mastered. So it will be with you as to prayer. Only try, remembering that God accepts the willing mind. The greatest obstacle is not want of ability, but want of will. I know that the poor often say, I have no book learning, and therefore cannot pray. And some are ignorant enough to suppose that only ministers of religion need

pray. Had you no personal wants, then indeed you might more plausibly thus reason. But prayer must be the act of your own mind, of yourself individually. God requires you to pray. The prayer of your minister, your relatives and friends, does not make your own prayer unnecessary. Their prayers may be of use in obtaining for you grace to seek God more earnestly; but you cannot expect to obtain his mercy and blessing, unless you yourself unfeignedly apply to the throne of grace. And as to ability to pray, it is a deep sense of your necessities that forms the great qualification for real prayer. Hence all persons, high and low, learned and unlearned, are by nature on a level in this respect. A beggar feeling his poverty and wretchedness, does not want book learning to teach him how to come to ask your alms. He simply tells you his distress, points to his tattered garments, or his pallid or diseased body, and thus most effectually makes his way to your heart. And so, though you cannot read, you may still pray to God, and be accepted by him.

It is not an uncommon objection, *I am too much occupied to pray.*—Prayer is very proper for those who have time, but I am so full of other engagements that I cannot attend to it.—You surely do not mean to say so! Time! cannot get time! how do you employ your time? Is none of it wasted in sinful plesures or pursuits? Do you ever find leisure to talk about your children's or friend's good qualities? Do you never find opportunity to thank men for earthly favours? and have you not time to acknowledge God's goodness of which your lives are full? if you are afflicted, can you not find time to unbosom yourself to a friend, who yet perhaps can afford you no effectual help; and should you not tell your cares and sorrows to God, your best friend, who can deliver you from all your troubles? but you forget that devotion itself is the most important part of your business, the greatest work of your life. You have more to do with God than with the whole world. Prayer will obtain God's blessing on all you do. It will prepare you for a happy eternity. You are not lavishing away your time or misemploying it by prayer. It was a saying of Dr. Donne's "that the only time he saved, or employed to the best purpose, he spent in piety and prayer, and in doing good." I answer your plea of business, by the experience of a devout man who said, "when I have hastened over the duties of God's worship, out of a too eager desire to follow my worldly business, I did many times meet with some secret cross in my affairs; whereas when I took my ordinary time, God did make my other business to succeed the better, or else my mind was brought to a quiet submission to the Divine will." No business in the world brings such unspeakable gain as private prayer does. He that prays well, will do all well besides.* What are you labouring for? the good things of this life? Remember, then, that devotion "procures," as Barrow observes, "wealth, inestimably precious, pleasure infinitely satisfactory, honour incomparably noble above all that this world can afford." Look at David, Daniel, and St. Paul, men the most constant in devotion, and yet incessantly engaged, and manifestly blessed, in their several stations.

Another man will tell us, *I find no benefit from prayer.*—I have prayed, and seem no better for it; nay, rather worse. —If you feel more of your guilt and sinfulness, that of itself is an advantage, and should bring you more to the Saviour. This is a vain excuse. Shall the minister give up preaching because his congregation seem to receive no immediate benefit? Shall the husbandman, because the seed just sown in one part of the field has not directly sprung up, not sow the remainder of the field? Let this objection lead you not to neglect your prayers, but to examine their character. We know that true prayer is attended with the greatest benefits. One devout person

* Fenelon, quoted by Sheppard, remarks, "we must reserve the needful hours for communing with God in prayer. Persons who are in considerable offices, have so many indispensable duties to fulfil, that scarcely any time remains to them for communion with God, except they strictly apply themselves to its regulation. It is necessary then to be firm in adopting and observing a rule. Our rigour in this may seem excessive; but without it all falls into confusion; we are dissipated and relaxed; we lose our strength; we are insensibly at a distance from God."

would sometimes say to her friends, "I would not be hired out of my closet for a thousand worlds."

Some venture to say, "*I am too wicked to pray.*—The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." Is it my duty to pray while unregenerate? But he who thinks that he shall get rid of the duty of prayer on account of his wickedness, does not only confess, but aggravate his guilt and his condemnation. You must not, indeed, come with the same wicked mind with which you committed your sins; but go grieved and penitent; and the sooner you go the better. "The ploughing of the wicked," all they do, "is sin:" and yet even a worldly man would not therefore justify them in being idle. Your neglect of prayer is perhaps the very cause of your wickedness. Begin to seek the grace of prayer, and God will give you grace to amend. It is your duty, though unregenerate, to pray especially for a new heart. When God had promised the new heart and the new spirit to the Jews, he adds, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Who more wicked than Simon Magus? and yet the apostle calls on him to repent and pray to God. Your guilt should bring you to the Saviour, and not keep you from him. Will not the sick man desire to see the physician? Is keeping at a distance, and contemptuous and negligent conduct in an offender as likely to gain the favour of him that is offended, as a humble and meek confession of fault, and entreaty for pardon? All the practise and conduct of man, all your own experience, all the confessions of sin, and all the petitions for mercy which are recorded in the Bible, testify against such an idea. If your confession of wickedness be the real feeling of your heart, you see it is the very reason that you should immediately begin to meditate on your sad condition, to repent, and seek God's mercy in prayer. But if it be not the feeling of your heart, this excuse for neglecting prayer needs no answer.

There are others who seem to think that all exhortations to prayer savour of *legality*. We are to be saved by believing, and not by working. But how gross is the mistake of such. We press it not as a mere task or a meritorious labour, but as a plain duty. We state it to be a privilege and a blessing bestowed on all the children of God. We are not, it is true, saved by our prayers, but by Christ; yet we shall never be saved without prayer, for the spirit of prayer is a part of our salvation. Living in a neglect of prayer, is a plain proof, whatever men's notions or fancies may be, whatever their doctrinal sentiments are, that they have none of the spirit of adoption, and so do not belong to Christ. Nay, a disregard of prayer shows that you have none of the real feelings of evangelical truth, which, working by love, ever influences the soul to seek the presence of him we love.

Is there not at the bottom of all these objections, a reason of this kind, *I dislike prayer*—It puts a restraint upon all my ways—It compels me to think of what I would rather forget?—But what are you thus owning yourself to be? It is the character of the wicked, "God is not in all his thoughts;" they dislike to "retain God in their knowledge." Ah! remember, at one time or other all flesh must come before God; he now sits on a throne of grace, where you may obtain mercy; he will hereafter sit on a throne of judgment, where he will for ever condemn those who have not sought and found "grace to help in time of need."

This neglect of prayer is the fault of many; but there is a generation "who are righteous in their own eyes," who *trust in their prayers*.—They reason, little as they think it, on the supposition that every prayer they make, God is, as it were, so much in debt to them, and thus that by the multitude of their prayers they deserve heaven. This is a common but a strange mistake. What merit can there be in begging and seeking that, which if we obtain, lays us under increased obligation? Israel of old "followed after the law of righteousness," but they did not attain it, "because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Is this not too much your case? Be not mistaken; though prayer is good in its proper place,

it is not good in the way of meriting any thing from God. It is not good in the way even of disposing God to give. he is ever ready to give abundantly unto us, "more ready to hear than we are to pray, and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve." But it is good, as it is pursuing the plan which God has appointed for obtaining his blessings ;— it is good as it is the way in which he bestows them. Renounce, then, your own righteousness; and thus humbly and believingly seek, and you shall find.

If you did but know the true character of your fancied righteousness, you would say with Isaiah, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," as a rejected garment. You would enter into the feelings of the excellent Bishop Beveridge, who declares,* "I know not how it is with others, but for my own part I do not remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed in my life-time with that reverence, or heard with that attention, or did any other work, with that pure and single eye, as I ought to have done." Or, as he says in another place, "I do not only betray the inbred venom of my heart, by poisoning my *common* actions, but even my most *religious* performances also with sin. I cannot pray but I sin; I cannot hear or preach a sermon, but I sin ; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin. Nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them ; my repentance needs to be repented of ; my tears want washing ; and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over with the blood of my Redeemer. Thus not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties speak me a child of Adam. Insomuch that whenever I reflect on my past actions, methinks I cannot but look on my whole life, from the time of my conception to this very moment, to be but as one continued act of sin."

With these feelings, you would be sensible at once that Jesus Christ is the only and complete Saviour of sinners, and that it is only "by his obedience many are made righteous." Instead of trusting in your prayers, you would mourn over their imperfections, and be led to trust simply, wholly, and entirely in Christ and him crucified. An old writer, Scudder, observes, "God uses, when he is overcome by prayer," (alluding to Jacob, Gen. xxxii, 28.) "to work in them that do overcome, some sense of weakness, to let them know that they prevail with him in prayer, not by any strength of their own, not by any worthiness of their prayers, when they have prayed best, but from the goodness of God's free grace, from the worthiness of Christ's intercession, by whom they offer up their prayers, and from the truth of his promise made unto them that pray. If it were not thus, many, when they have their heart's desire in prayer, would ascribe all to the goodness of their prayers, and not to the free grace of God ; and would be proud of their own strength, which is in truth none at all."

I have thus endeavoured to show you the nature and privilege of prayer; may you be so convinced that it is your duty, as to be desirous of farther instruction on this subject.

CHAPTER III.

The Assistance of the Holy Spirit in Prayer.

Suppose the case of a calm at sea. The ship in the midst of the ocean is sometimes arrested in its progress by a dead calm. Every sail is spread to catch the dying breeze, but all in vain. The vessel continues almost motionless on the vast expanse, or only rocked to and fro by the swell of the sea. The mariners look out day after day, with longing eyes for a favourable gale to carry them onward; and perhaps when they almost despair of attaining it; when in this hour of need the sea manifests in the distance a darker hue, some clouds are seen rising in the horizon, a ripple appears upon the water, the sails begin to fill, the wished for breeze springs up, the sea parts and foams, and the ship darts along to its destined port.

Thus it is sometimes with the Chris-

* See Beveridge's Private Thoughts, a most useful practical Book for the young Christian.

tian. He needs the breeze from above, and could not without it advance in his course. Sometimes after using every means of grace, his soul seems motionless in the voyage, and his heart sighs and longs for better days. His sails are spread, he is on his way, longing and waiting for, and yet not immediately receiving, the favourable breath of heaven. It is delayed, perhaps, to show him his own inability and weakness, that he is entirely dependent on divine grace, and that the Holy Spirit is the free gift of God. But he is waiting for the breeze, and at length the wind blows, every sail is filled, every faculty, affection, and power is engaged; he proceeds rapidly in his course, and is wafted along toward the desired haven.

"Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." The words are full and express: *nothing*, nothing pleasing to God.

We are by nature *averse to prayer*. If prayer were natural to us, we should find no difficulty in having our hearts engaged in an intercourse so advantageous and so honourable. But who that has attempted this duty, has not found an averseness of heart, a distaste or disrelish, when about to engage in secret prayer? The soul is often straitened, shut up, and closed. Though the Christian knows it to be both his duty and privilege to pray, he sometimes finds an insuperable impotency and unwillingness. His mind is, perhaps, filled with worldly cares and anxieties; his affections are wandering after a thousand vanities, and he finds it a laborious effort to drag his soul to the throne of grace.

We are also *ignorant as to the subjects of prayer*.—"We know not what to pray for as we ought." We indeed feel our misery, but are not fully acquainted either with the cause or the remedy. Blind men may be conscious of the evil which surrounds them, but cannot see the way to avoid it, nor know how to obtain that which will be for their good. If we know at all what to pray for, yet we have not adequate views of our original depravity, and our exceeding sinfulness and unbelief; nor of the fulness and power of Christ the Saviour. We do not regard the glory of God, but our own ease and pleasure. By nature we love outward good, and are ready to ask in sickness for health, in pain for ease, in sorrow for comfort, in poverty for wealth, in disregard and contempt for honour and esteem; without considering God's glory, or our eternal good. The mother of Zebedee's children asked for a place of great honour for her sons; but our Lord said, "Ye know not what ye ask." Often those things which we are ready to ask for, would, if God were to give them to us, be our greatest curse.

Nor, however useful and valuable in themselves, do forms of prayer remedy our ignorance. It is one thing to repeat a form of prayer from a book, or from memory; and it is another thing to have the spirit of prayer in the heart. Two persons may use the same words, and one be worshipping God in spirit and in truth; whilst the other is drawing near to Him with his lips only, and his heart is far from him.

This ignorance in the understanding is accompanied also with *a perverseness in the affections*. We have that carnal mind within us, which "is enmity against God." Therefore, though we have all knowledge, though we may pray, either by the most excellent of forms, or by the exercise of the understanding, our affections do not naturally rise to God. The matter of our prayer may be good; but the Lord looks at the heart that offers it up. Are your prayers then offered up with a humble and believing heart? are your affections holy and heavenly? are your desires ardent and steady? or, do you not often feel an insurmountable languor oppressing you; so that, like David's, your soul cleaves to the dust?

It will make the subject more plain, if we endeavour to show the state of the heart in public worship. Judging only by the outward expressions of penitence and contrition, of holy desire, and warm thanksgiving, of earnest intercession, we should say, What heavenly Christians are these! But could we see all that the eye of God discerns in the hearts of the worshippers, the vain thoughts and distractions, the earthly schemes and plans contriving and executing in the midst of

of all this apparent devotion, what a mockery would our solemn meetings be often found to be; the very house of God turned again into a "den of thieves." O what a cold, wandering, and distracted heart is often concealed, under the drama, as it were, of pure and heavenly prayers!

I have stated thus fully the infirmities and deficiencies connected with the performance of this holy duty, in order that the absolute necessity of divine assistance may be more clearly perceived. Blessed be God, we need not be left to ourselves, under the wretchedness and ruin of our fallen nature. However great and multiplied our infirmities, however dark our ignorance, however dull and dead our hearts, there is a power that can raise, support, enlighten, and revive.

The necessity of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, is a principle of main and vital importance in the Christian system; and therefore the Scriptures are very express upon it.

The Holy Ghost is plainly *promised to the Church.*—Thus it is foretold, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." "I will put my Spirit within you." And our Lord evidently extends the promise of the Spirit to all that seek it, when he says, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

The Holy Spirit is promised *for the purpose of assisting us in our prayers.*—That promise is directly in point—"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." Again, the Apostle thus describes the experience of Christians—"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Dr. Owen observes, "that it cannot be denied, that the assistance which the Holy Spirit gives us in our prayers and supplications, is more frequently and expressly asserted in the Scripture, than any other operations of his whatever."

The Scriptures, also, when exciting us to the duty of prayer, direct us to pray through the aid of the Holy Ghost. Thus Jude says, (ver. 20, 21,) "praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." St. Paul says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

This aid of the Spirit in prayer is *a blessing which belongs to all the children of God.* Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." "Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Indeed, the gift of the Spirit is the great promise of the New Testament. It is the grand privilege of the Christian Church, that since the resurrection of Christ, a larger measure of that Spirit has been given to the people of God. Jesus Christ was to baptize his people with the Holy Ghost. He told his disciples just before his death, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

The sentiments of the Church of England on this doctrine are very clearly expressed. Thus in the 13th Article it is said, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God." In the Sermon on Homily for Rogation week, it is said, "that we may boldly come in prayer, and call upon Almighty God as our Father, it is by this Holy Spirit, which maketh intercession for us with continual sighs." Hence we find in the Liturgy several prayers expressly for the aid of the Holy Spirit. "Grant that thy Holy Spirit may, in all things, direct and rule our hearts." "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee." These, with many other similar passages, which might be brought, show the mind of our Reformers on this subject.

Having shown the necessity of the Spirit's aid, I would now endeavour, in some measure, to explain how this aid is given. The Scriptures express it generally under the terms, "helpeth our infirmities," and "maketh intercession for us," &c.

The Holy Spirit *helps our infirmities.* The original expression for "helpeth," (*συναντιλαμβανεται*) implies, that the Spirit takes upon himself a large part of the burden by which our infirmity is weighed down, and not only succours us in a slight degree, but effectually relieves us, by bearing himself, as it were, the burden with us. "The image is taken from one who sets his shoulders and lifts with us at the same load. What if it be not said in Scripture that we shall be wholly delivered in this world from our moral sicknesses; it is sufficient cause for thankfulness that we are effectually assisted under them." Even a renewed soul cannot of itself raise its affections and desires after heavenly things. We find the remains of our corrupt nature an oppressive load; but if we ask, and diligently seek for the aid of the Spirit, that burden under which we are ready to sink will be removed, and our hearts raised in prayer to God; the Spirit will relieve us in our necessities. Preston, in his Treatise called "The Saint's Exercise," thus illustrates the subject: "A fountain has always an aptness to pour forth water, but cannot if it be stopped by mud, stones, or other impediments: so in prayer, 'the spirit is willing,' (to pray or do other duties,) 'but the flesh is weak.' Yet here the Holy Ghost 'helps our infirmities,' removing stoppages from the fountain, taking away carnal impediments, and stirring up the regenerate part, whereby we are able to make a spiritual prayer unto God."

"The Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding, to show us what we need; and sanctifies the heart, so that we desire what is really good for us." He removes our natural ignorance and blindness. We know not our sinfulness and unbelief; but the Holy Spirit reproves or convinces the world "of sin, because they believe not in Christ." He thus shows us our great and alarming danger, and inclines us earnestly to seek deliverance.

Our Lord says to the Apostles, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." We may therefore reasonably conclude that the Holy Spirit acts upon our minds after this manner, bringing the declarations, the threatenings, and the promises of the word of Christ to our recollection; and thereby producing in us a desire to obey his word, escape his displeasure, and obtain his favour.

The enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Spirit are of great importance as to prayer, being needful in preparing our hearts for holy intercourse with God, and for desiring those things which will glorify Him, and really benefit our own souls.

We know not what to pray for as we ought. St. James affirms, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it on your lusts." This being so, "the Holy Spirit maketh intercession for us, according to the will of God." He directs and guides our minds to right ends in asking, and "the Lord knows the mind of the Spirit. He approves, and accepts the prayer made under his influence.

The intercession of the Holy Spirit differs from that of Christ. Our Lord intercedes in heaven, separate and apart from us, by himself, at the throne of glory. The Holy Spirit intercedes in, and with our hearts, at the throne of grace. The gift and intercession of the Holy Spirit is the fruit and effect of the intercession of Christ, who, "when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received 'this gift' for men, yea, even for the rebellious."

Christians have, then, the intercession, the additional interposition of the Holy Spirit; like a powerful and able advocate, who takes up our sinking cause; urges our necessities, and our pleas, with power, earnestness, and perseverance; and places them with strong and irresistible effect in such a light, that it is evident the suit is obtained and the request granted. Thus the Spirit maketh

intercession for us, suggesting to us, and offering up in us, those desires, arguments, and pleas, which would otherwise never have arisen in our minds.

"The Holy Spirit," says one of the Reformers, "excites within us confidence, desires, and sighs, to the conception of which our native powers were altogether inadequate." There are pious persons of very poor attainments in other respects, without learning or human acquirements, in the very lowest stations of life, who asking for the aid of the Holy Spirit, can with the greatest propriety of expression, the deepest reverence, and an uninterrupted fluency of words, pour out their souls to God, and edify their families and their neighbours. Indeed, have not those who entirely decry the assistance of the Holy Spirit, as given to believers in our days, reason to fear lest they should be guilty, in some measure, of the sin of blasphemy against him?

There is a distinction, not improperly made, between the *gift* and *grace* of prayer, though perhaps the more just distinction would be between the talent of elocution and the spirit of prayer. Some have a natural or acquired power of a great command of words, and a full flow of language, which enables them to pray with facility, and so far it is very desirable; and I hesitate not to say with Dr. Watts, that "there is the ordinary assistance of the Spirit required, even to the attainment of this holy skill or ability to pray." But men may have this talent, and yet have none of the real feeling of want, desire, resignation, peace, hope, joy, &c. which form the essence of true prayer, and without which the best expressions are of little worth. The right spirit of prayer is not merely to be able to press God with the most proper words and urgent vehemence; this is talent and elocution. True prayer is a higher thing, the special gift of the Holy Ghost; not so much a matter of the lips, as of the heart. He has the most of this gift, who has "the most enlightened apprehension of the God to whom he speaks: the deepest sense of his own wants; the most eager longings after grace, the most fervent desires of supplies from heaven; and in a word, whose heart sends up the strongest cries to the Father of mercies." Hence many may have much of the spirit of prayer, who have but a small degree of the power of utterance.

Much, indeed, of the work of the Spirit, is secret. We know not various particulars connected with it. We know it rather by its effects, than by its mode of operation. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We experience its power and that is sufficient. The Christian knows that he has often knelt down averse to prayer, dead, dull, stupid; almost without desiring the blessings for which we ought to ask. And yet, with all his weakness, after looking for the aid of the Spirit, after praying as David did, "Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." And persevering in asking, seeking, and knocking, he has in such a remarkable way experienced the presence of God, as to fill him with joy unspeakable, and a hope full of glory. He has, in these cases, sometimes found an unction, an enlargement of expression, so far beyond any thing that he had previously calculated on, or could expect, accompanied by such lively and vehement desires and thirsting after God, and holiness, and glory, as satisfactorily and evidently to his mind, marked the agency and assistance of a divine power "which maketh intercesssion for us."

But farther, he maketh intercession "with groanings which cannot be uttered." I am sensible that I am here bringing a subject forward which must be in a great measure unintelligible (and may therefore appear absurd) to those who have never experienced it; but since the sacred writings have plainly stated it, we should neither conceal it, nor keep it back. And conceive the case of a mind truly and fully awakened to see the shortness of time, the vanity of worldly things, the unutterable glory of the blessed, the never-ending anguish of the condemned, the boundless ages of eternity, the uncertainty of every moment, and the inseparable connection between

obtaining grace in this life, and glory in the next. If we realize this state of mind, we may easily imagine that there are such ardent thirstings wrought in the immortal soul, after pardon, grace, Christ, heaven, and glory, as no words are great or strong enough to express. The Psalms of David often manifest this state of mind—"My soul fainteth," he says, "for thy salvation. O Lord, how long! I am weary with my groaning." Here we may observe some of the groanings of him in whom the Spirit intercedes; but yet this intercession is with such importunity of desire, such holy pleading and wrestling with God, such ardour of spirit, such inward labouring and working of the heart toward God, as cannot be expressed by words.

It may be proper, for preventing mistakes, to add, that it is not meant that we may now receive, or expect, those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit which enabled the early Christians to pray in a foreign tongue, or suggested every particular word or expression. Our prayers are not so entirely under the influence of the Spirit, as, like those of David, to be properly the work of inspiration: so much of our weakness mingles with them, that we cannot say of any sentence, This is the perfect work of the Spirit. Every feeling, and desire, must also be tried by the sacred touchstone, the Word of God, that we may know whence it comes. But the Holy Spirit does give those graces of love, fear, hope, and joy, that are suited to this duty; does excite holy desires, raise holy expectations, and work holy affections in us; does, we are persuaded, often secretly incline our minds to pray, and help us in praying, giving us clear perceptions, a ready utterance, and a humble confidence; and this aid is totally distinct from and superior to that general aid, which the providence of God affords to men in general, in order to their performance of the various actions of their natural life. "The workings of the Spirit are not indeed," says Watts, "to be easily distinguished by ourselves, or by others, from the rational motions of our own hearts, influenced by moral arguments; but by the whole tendency, and the sanctifying effects, we may know that we had some assistance of the blessed Spirit."

Some mistake in another way, supposing that men should never attempt to pray but when they feel the present impulse of the Holy Spirit. But in reply it may be observed, that we are commanded to pray always. Go forward in the duty, and you may expect difficulties to be removed. Neglect not any proper season of prayer; nor, on the other hand, neglect any duty of your station under the pretence of an impulse to pray. The Holy Spirit draws us to God at fit seasons.

We are not in danger of quenching, or grieving, the Spirit by the humble and diligent use of the means of grace; but there is much danger in losing this heavenly guest by the indulgence of any sin, and especially of any sensual iniquity. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" O defile not that temple, provoke not that Spirit; live in the Spirit and then you will pray in the Spirit.

Having thus guarded against some mistakes, let it be remarked, what a comfort it is that there is an express promise that "our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." You need not then fear, however dull, or dead, or cold your heart may be, to set about this duty. Seek, and you may fully expect to obtain, that aid of the Spirit, which will help you, and carry you through all your difficulties. Be diligent in reading the Bible, in coming to the Saviour, and in earnest entreaties for the influence of his Spirit. If you would obtain much of this divine influence, live near to your Lord who gives it.

CHAPTER IV.

The Intercession of Jesus Christ.

You have now seen how the Holy Spirit assists us in prayer; his aid, and the acceptance of our prayers, are obtained through the intercession of Jesus Christ. While the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is "God over all, blessed for

ever;" it discovers to us also his mediatorial kingdom. It tells us that "there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." "Him hath God exalted as a Prince and a Saviour," to give many blessed gifts to his people.

The first fruit of his ascending up on high, was the gift of the Holy Spirit. St. Peter shows us that the prophet Joel had foretold that full effusion of the Holy Spirit which took place on the ascension of Jesus Christ, in these words—"and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." And after describing other effects of this, he says, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Our Lord also, tells his disciples that he will pray for this gift: he says, "I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you *for ever*. The gift of the Spirit, and the intercession of Christ, are thus connected together in the sacred writings.

It is unnecessary here to enter on a description of this intercession in all its bearings, it will be sufficient chiefly to dwell on it with reference to our prayers.

The intercession of Christ is his earnest address to God in behalf of those for whom he prays. In order the better to understand this, consider *the office which he bears as our High Priest*.—The High Priest of Israel had to burn incense in the holy place on the altar of incense, morning and evening perpetually throughout the year. And he was once a year to appear in the holy of holies, alone, to sprinkle blood upon, and before, the mercy seat; to make an atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel." The Apostle shows us that this was typical of Jesus Christ, who "is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." And he points out the superior advantage of this priesthood on account of the holy character and the enduring continuance of our High Priest: "Wherefore," he says, "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." While his "people are praying without," our High Priest is interceding within, and offering up our prayers.

Indeed, other offices which Christ bears, are full of comfort in our approaches to God. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," by whom we go to the Father. He is "a Prophet" to teach us to pray, and "a King who shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

Consider, then, *his redemption*—Man was afar off from God, guilty, and under the penalty of that sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" How was the mercy of God to be displayed, and his justice remain unsullied? By the death of the holy Jesus, the Son of God, his justice is satisfied and engaged on the sinner's side; so that his mercy may flow to sinners in copious and uninterrupted streams. The divine love has its brightest displays, in being manifested towards the unworthy; and the Almighty arm is now stretched forth to save, and not to destroy the sinful. All the perfections of God being engaged on the sinner's side, the intercession of Him who has accomplished this, will evidently prevail. The sinner may now be received as a child returning to a reconciled Father. Here, then, and here only, is the true ground of encouragement for us to draw near with confidence to the holy God.

Consider the *situation of the Intercessor*. He is "at the right hand of God." We may learn hence his power, his dignity, his holiness, his interest with God, and his being ever present in heaven for us. "All power is given him in heaven and earth." "All things go," says Bishop Hopkins, "by favour and friendship in the courts of heaven; if we stand upon our own merits and deserts, we shall be shamefully disappointed in our expectations: we have no merit to take place in heaven, but only the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ." Ah! how absurdly do they act, who, when such an Intercessor pleads for us, put their cause into the hands of any creature, saint, or angel.

Consider *his character*. He is the beloved Son of God, "the elect in whom

his soul delighteth." He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." And with all this, he is full of compassion, tenderness, and love. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infimities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He is one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. Seeing, then, that we have such a great, such a compassionate "High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Consider, farther, *the nature of his Intercession.* St. John seems to give us an emblematic view of this; "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Even the prayers of the saints are so defective, that they need the incense of our Redeemer's merit to make them acceptable unto God.

Jesus Christ intercedes *by personally appearing for us before God.* In heaven itself he now appears "in the presence of God for us. This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place." The virtue, merit, and power of that blood still remain. How sure may we be, then, that he will obtain what he asks, when he pleads that he *died* to procure it. He ascended into heaven with the body in which he suffered; and we may imagine, when he makes intercession, that body silently and yet powerfully urges his plea in our behalf. Hence, St John, who saw the glory of the inner temple of God, says, "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, stood a lamb as it had been slain." This view of the subject has been well illustrated by the story of Amyntas and Æchylas related by the historian Ælian. Æchylas was condemned to death by the Athenians, and was about to be led to execution. His brother Amyntas had signalized himself in the service of his country, and on the day of a most illustrious victory, in a great measure obtained by his means, had lost his hand. He came into the court, just as his brother was condemned, and without saying any thing, exposed the stump of his arm from under his garment, and held it up in their sight; and the historian tells us, "that when the judges saw this mark of his sufferings, they remembered what *he* had done, and for his sake discharged the guilty brother, whose life had been forfeited." The wounded body of the Saviour, though there may remain no visible marks of his humble state, is, in the sight of God, thus perpetually pleading for his sinful and guilty brethren. Not that God the Father is severe, austere, difficult to be entreated, or hard to be won: this would be a very mistaken view of him whose name is *Love.* The Father appoints this way of approach in infinite compassion and love to us, that we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace:" and though his holiness be such that he cannot endure the approach of sinners without a Mediator, yet it was his own free grace which moved him to provide a Mediator, and disposes him to accept his mediation in our behalf. Hence the Father himself is represented as willing to hear us, when we pray in the name of Jesus. Thus our Lord says to his disciples, "At that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you."

Jesus Christ intercedes for his people *by praying for them.* Does he see them exposed to the just vengeance of the holy Almighty God? Is the sentence gone forth, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" he prays, "Let it alone this year also, and I will dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well; but if not, after that thou shalt cut it down." Are any of his disciples exposed to peculiar temptations and dangers, so that it may be said of them, as it was of Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat?" he adds, "But

I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Indeed, we could never pray ourselves, we could never approach unto God so as to be accepted of him, but through the intercession of Christ. "No man," saith our Lord, "cometh unto the Father, but by me." By his prayers we receive the Holy Spirit, and many other spiritual blessings. In the 17th of John, you have a delightful specimen and example of the prayers which Jesus our Lord himself makes for his people.

Jesus Christ also *offers up our prayers.*—It was the office of the Jewish priests to present the prayers of Israel unto God at the time they burned incense before the Lord on the altar. And thus our High Priest, by his own intercession, makes even our poor and imperfect sighs and groans prevailing and effectual. The very best prayers we make, even when aided by the Holy Spirit of our God, are so tainted with our sins, and so mingled with our imperfections, as to need his mediation for their acceptance. He has assured us, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." This name of Christ enabled those who used it, through faith in his name, to work miracles, cast out devils, speak with new tongues, and oppose and overcome Satan, the world, and the flesh; and by it we shall assuredly prevail in all our petitions. Our persons and our prayers are accepted of God, in and by Jesus Christ.

It is delightful to consider further, that *the intercession of our Lord is all in our behalf.* It is said of the prophet Elijah, "Elias made intercession to God against Israel." "He was," says Trail, "a severe prophet, and had severe service put into his hand; but our great Prophet and High Priest makes no intercession against his Israel, but all for them." In that pattern of what he is doing, we may observe that he mentions not one fault of his disciples, but selects what is good in their conduct, and then pleads their cause. Let us see in this his love; let us trust him entirely.

The intercession of Christ is *an enduring* act of mercy. His grace and love never fail. It is said, "He ever liveth to make intercession." Therefore the Apostle adds, "He is able to save to the uttermost." We need not fear that we are now too late to obtain the advantages of it. He intercedes for his church now, as he did in the days of his flesh.

It is also an *intercession for sinners.*—It was foretold of him, "He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Hence he prayed even for his murderers. When they had taunted and reviled him, and nailed him to the accursed tree, he still prays, "Father, forgive them." And there is a special intercession for his people, which may greatly encourage believers. St. Paul says, "who also maketh intercession for us." The connection here shows him to mean God's peculiar people; hence our Lord says, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." Augustine says, "Christian men in their prayers mutually recommend each other to the divine regard. That person for whom no one intercedes, while he intercedes for all, is the true and only mediator."

I have stated thus fully and plainly, from the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of the intercession of Jesus Christ, because it is not only a most delightful truth to those who feel the burden of their sins, but is highly profitable to us when duly improved. To this end it should be considered before, at the time of and after your prayers.

Before prayers. Make it the only ground of your encouragement to draw near to God. Do not, on the one hand, trust in any preparation which you may have made, or in any dispositions which you may have acquired; and on the other hand, whatever your former transgressions, or aggravated wickedness, may have been, or whatever is the conviction of your present sinfulness, or your indisposition to approach God, still endeavour to come with freedom, knowing that you "have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins."

At the time of prayer. Let the intercession of Christ encourage you. Expect, through his mediation, the spirit of grace and supplication. By the exercise

of faith, however weak, still expect to receive, "out of his fulness, grace," suited to our necessity. However great the matter for which you ask, however many things in yourself may tend to discourage or discomfort you; you have a sufficient ground to hope for the acceptance of your prayers, through the name and mediation of Jesus Christ. His gracious intercession remains firm and unchangeable. Let faith in Christ's merits quiet and compose your troubled mind, and dispose and strengthen you to leave every petition with comfort and confidence in his hands.

After prayer. However conscience may accuse you of many wanderings, imperfections, and distractions, or abuses of former answers to prayer, or however earnest or fervent your petitions, still plead for acceptance only on this ground, Christ is your mediator. Your hope of a favourable reception of any prayer is, and is only, in the name and work of Jesus Christ, and not in your own prayers. A practical writer observes, "If we have cast our anchor on Christ, and rest upon his merits and intercession, in order to the receiving of an answer to our prayer, we shall have a sufficient hold to keep us sure and steadfast, in the midst of the tossing waves of this world. By this we may answer all. Christ is faithful, and a tender sympathizing High Priest, and so will not, and cannot forget or neglect our cause."*

"He," says Ambrose, "is our mouth, with which we address the Father; our eye, by which we behold him; our hands, by which we present ourselves to him: without whose mediation neither we, nor any of all the saints, have the least intercourse with God."

CHAPTER V.

On Private Prayer.

It is observed by Dr. Owen, "that if a man of a carnal mind be brought into a large company, he will have much to do; if into a company of Christians, he will feel little interest; if into a still smaller, engaged in religious exercises, he will feel still less; but if taken into a closet, and forced to meditate on God and eternity, this will be insupportable to him." Man is evidently by nature averse to all communion with God. There is an enmity to be removed. And hence arises the necessity of a change of mind; of obtaining "a spiritual mind," without which, spiritual truths and exercises can neither engage nor influence the heart. The man who possesses a spiritual mind, does, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, often find that closet retirement, which Dr. Owen states to be so insupportable to the carnal mind, a real privilege.

The duty of prayer generally has already been proved; and that of closet devotion is plain from our Lord's direction. Let us endeavour, however, always to consider it as an advantage afforded to us, rather than as a work required of us.

Baxter well expresses this:* "What delightful converse may a Christian have with God alone! He is always present, always at leisure to be spoke with, always easy of access! He has no interest that will clash with our happiness. He never mistakes our meaning nor our character. In proportion, indeed, as any thing of God appears in men, their converse is excellent and delightful. But there is so much of vanity and sin in all of us, as exceedingly darkens our light, and damps the pleasure, and blasts the profit of our mutual converse. How often have I been delighted in God, when I have found most deceit and darkness in the world! How often has he comforted me, when it was not in man to do it!"

In order to have a fuller view of secret prayer, we will consider it under different sections, as it is distinguished from other kinds of worship; as it respects the object of worship; the subjects to be mentioned; the use of forms; the

* Brown on Prayer: an author to whom the writer has been often indebted.

* See his excellent little Tract, "Converse with God in Solitude."

various parts, the answer, the frequency, and the reward of prayer. After dwelling on these particulars in this chapter, we may afterwards be the more brief in remarks on other kinds of prayer.

SECT. I.—*On Secret Prayer, as distinguished from other kinds of Worship.*

There are *some things in which secret prayer has an advantage over social and public worship.* By praying in secret we give God the glory of his being every where present, and seeing and knowing all things. We acknowledge not only his general providence, as taking care of communities; but his particular providence, in watching over us individually. We express our faith in his presence, his power, and his love.

The Christian can also in secret give free vent to every desire: vary his request according to the present state of his mind, or the present necessities of the day or hour in which he is living; he can dwell on his personal wants; and, in short, give full scope to his feelings, and pour out his whole soul before God, with a freedom that he would not before his dearest friend.

Prayer in secret is also considered by our Lord as forming a line of distinction between the Christian and the mere professor. "When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." When we are constant in secret prayer, not as an act of self-righteousness, but from a feeling of necessity, and its being both our duty and privilege, we may hope well of our sincerity, and of the general state of our souls before God.

Other advantages of secret prayer, will be noticed afterwards. But it must not be concealed, that there are *peculiar difficulties in constant and fervent secret prayer.* We have many adversaries opposing us. We are by nature both reluctant to the duty, and utterly helpless and insufficient in ourselves. We can do nothing by our own strength; though we may "do all things by Christ strengthening us." And besides the oppositions of a corrupt nature within, the temptations of the world without continually draw and allure us from the practice of this duty. Our great enemy, Satan, also, uses every temptation to keep us from secret prayer. Hence, though it is a most evident and needful, as well as profitable duty, yet it is one, which it is not easy with constancy and effect to fulfil. We do not find it so difficult to read the Bible, go to Church, or hear sermons, as we do to persevere in constant, fervent, and believing private prayer. "It is easier," says one, "to hear a whole hour, than to pray for a quarter of an hour." "When," says another, "we have overcome the difficulties at one time, it may be the next day we shall meet with new conflicts, new distempers, new afflictions, new strength of lusts, and a new indisposition of mind, against which we must put on a strong and unalterable resolution; as that holy man who said, he never went to pray but he found so many impediments, that except he so bound himself by a firm determination, he could never have been constant, or kept himself from formal or customary performance." Let it then encourage us to consider, that nothing so effectually as prayer impairs the kingdom of darkness, and hinders the success of our adversary. It is a just and excellent observation, that continuing in prayer will make a man give over sinning, or else, continuing in sin will make a man give over praying.

The retirement of private prayer specially distinguishes it; and our Lord has, in a few words, fully stated to us its true character in this respect—"Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. The principle which is here inculcated is, the avoiding of all show in your religion, any thing that might foster vain glory, or appear to proceed from it. In actions done in public, the opinions and thoughts of others, are apt to have an undue weight and influence upon our minds. Our Lord is not here speaking against public or social worship, which he elsewhere commands: but is exposing the vain show and hypocrisy

of mere professors, "having a form of godliness without the power."

That those who are here addressed do pray is taken for granted: the duty is manifest and unquestionable; and the mode of our Lord's expression may imply, that a Christian's living without prayer is a contradiction in terms.

The retirement of private devotion is strongly inculcated in the expression, "Enter into thy closet. Retire from company. Go by thyself. Be alone. The word ταμειον, (closet) means any retired solitary place, at home or abroad, where we may escape from the observation of others, and be undisturbed by them; not that the closet itself possesses any sanctity, or will work in the way of a charm. You are not to go into your closet on that account; but you retire from the notice of others to avoid ostentation on the one hand, and distraction on the other. "Shut thy door." Keep out the world, and prevent every intrusion: thou hast a great business to transact with thy God, and let not the dearest friend or relative interfere with thy intercourse and converse with him. The privacy of prayer is the great thing which is here enforced. Poor persons who have but one apartment, may enter into the spirit of this direction by praying wherever they can be retired. Isaac's closet was a field. "He went out to meditate in the field at even-tide." David's closet was his bed chamber. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Our Lord's closet was a mountain. "When he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray, when the evening was come he was there alone." Peter's closet was the house top. "Peter went upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour." Hezekiah's closet was turning "his face towards the wall, and praying unto the Lord."

But there is a retiredness of heart and a self-recollection which is of greater importance than any particular place of prayer. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, as has already been shown; let us then continually look for and solely depend on his aid, which alone can enable us to give our whole hearts to this great work. Some have found it a happy means of assisting in gaining self-recollection, to have nothing to do but to pray. "We must," says Bonnel, "shut all other businesses from our minds at that time, and say, I have nothing to do this half hour, but to wait on my God. For if we determine ourselves no time, but are in haste to do something else, as soon as we have done our prayers, it is a great hazard if we are recollected at all during our worship."

Sect. II.—*On the Being to be worshipped.*

It is evident that the Being whom all men are to worship, must be every where present, have all power and know all things. Many prayers being offered up, at the same time, by many persons, and for different things, an assurance that he possesses these attributes is necessary, in order to our placing confidence in him, that he will answer all, and give to each that which is best in his particular situation. Hence the absurdity of praying to Saints and Angels, or through their mediation.

God is also infinitely holy and righteous; "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." He has all means in his control; he is Lord of all worlds; and he has all riches in his possession. But when to these perfections we can add the attributes of goodness, tenderness, and love, we may then have the greatest confidence. And this is the case with the Christian. He may consider God, not only as the Father of the human race, but as *his father* in a more special relation. Christians have received "the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba, Father:" they are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Jesus Christ delights to bring this relation before us. He tells us, when ye pray, say, Our Father,—pray to thy Father which is in secret." Private prayer is the soul's approach in its retirements to this reconciled Father; to one who has been pleased to endear himself by so condescending and so kind a title. He is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is

named," and in him he is ours also. Our Lord says to Mary, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father,"—first mine, and then yours. And how graciously he encourages us to bring our wants before God—"What man is there of you, of whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him."

In praying to God the Father, we do not exclude the Son and Holy Spirit from our worship. We should ever include the thrice holy Jehovah in our adoration. In fact, we cannot as Christians worship the one Jehovah, but we include in that worship all the persons of the sacred Trinity; God is our Father only in Christ, and we call on him as such. We may however pray separately to each person of the ever blessed Trinity. We may pray to Jesus Christ, (Luke xxiii, 42; Acts vii, 59; 2 Cor. xii, 8, 9,) and to the Spirit, (Matt. xxviii, 9; 2 Cor. xiii, 14; Isa. vi, 3, 9, compared with Acts xxviii, 25.) In worshipping them, we only worship the one God; yet the general way of approaching the Almighty in prayer, is to God the Father, through the mediation of the Son, and by the aid of the Spirit.

How delightful is the relation subsisting between God and the Christian as Father and child! The child receives every thing freely from paternal love; it does not come to the father as a purchaser, or as a merchant with an equivalent. When a desire for any good arises in the child's mind, it does not offer to buy it at a price, but simply expresses its feelings and asks it as a gift. In its earliest years the child cannot speak its wants plainly; yet even in infancy, they are made known by looks and cries, and the father understands these expressions of its wishes. As the child grows up, all that the father requires of it is an affectionate and dutiful conduct, a reverence and honour, and obedience, totally distinct from slavish fear, and which in effect only tends to promote its real happiness.

It is under the influence of these feelings that we should come to God; and though we only learn to cry "Abba, Father," by slow degrees, let us persevere in faith and love, till we receive the full Spirit of adoption.

In worshipping God, we need not be anxious to comprehend the particulars of his nature, except as he has revealed himself. Beware of any fanciful representation or figure of him. All such things tend only to degrade him in our minds, and to fill us with unsuitable ideas of his majesty. They are also directly prohibited in the word of God. Jesus Christ is the only Mediator and ground of access to God the Father; and his Holy Spirit, the purchase of the blood of Christ, and sent by him to help our infirmities, our great Assistant. The view we should endeavour to have of God, is that which our Lord gives—"God is a Spirit;" and that which was revealed to Moses—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Keep fast hold then of this view of the character of God; it is exactly suited to the wants of sinners.

The consideration that the *eye of God is upon us*, that our heavenly Father is in secret and there beholds us, should be continually on our minds as a motive of continual watchfulness, and a source of the greatest comfort. "Thou God seest me," should be written on the walls of our closet; or, rather, deeply engraven on our hearts. Before an earthly superior, we are careful and circumspect in all our expressions and actions: how careful then should we be when we approach unto one, who, though he is our Father, is yet the *King of kings*, and the *Lord of lords?* "If an angel, in all his heavenly brightness, were to be with us, surely our hearts would feel awed by his glorious presence. How much more then should it affect us, and fill us with holy fear, to think, 'I am with God; he is present in the room with me! that God is now about me, whose glory stains

and sullies the beauty, and extinguishes the light of angels!"

Rush not, hastily, then, into the presence of God. Pause for a few moments. Meditate on his character. Consider his goodness, he is "our Father:" consider his greatness, he is "in heaven."

Recollect *the glorious Majesty of that Being whom you address.* He is in heaven, and we are upon earth. It is with reflections of this kind, that David begins many of his Psalms. Thus he says in the 104th Psalm, "O Lord, my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, who layeth the beams of his chamber in the water, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind." These recollections of his majesty are calculated through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to bring your mind to a state of reverence and a holy admiration; of solemnity and devotional feeling. But lest this view of his awful grandeur should discourage you,

Recollect *his wonderful grace and mercy.* Even look at him in Christ Jesus as a tender and loving Father; as full of compassion and goodness. How he endears himself to you by characters of the utmost tenderness, compassion, and love. "Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name." "Return, saith the Lord, for I am married to you." What affectionate wife will not rejoice in an opportunity of meeting a kind and faithful husband? What child, in a proper state of mind, will not willingly run to the arms of a tender father, inviting it to come to him? It is our want of faith and love that makes our prayers a task and a burden. How often God invites us to pray? how much he promises, in order to encourage us to come to him with a holy boldness and confidence, freely and unreservedly! We need not fear to ask, when God himself commands us to do so.

Sect. III.—*On the Subjects to be mentioned in Prayer.*

"The feeling of our wants," says Mrs. More, the confession of our sins, the acknowledgment of our dependence, the renunciation of ourselves, the supplication for mercy, the application to the fountain opened for sin, the cordial entreaty for the aid of the Spirit, the relinquishment of our own will, resolutions of better obedience, petitions that those resolutions may be directed and sanctified: these are the subjects in which the supplicant should be engaged, by which his thoughts should be absorbed."

Prayer being the expression of the heart's desire to God, we should, with all simplicity and sincerity, open our hearts unto him. When you retire to your devotions, lay aside all artifice, all needless form, all distracting anxiety, and express your desires with the utmost plainness of speech.

Consider before you begin, what are those *sins*, which, if you were now on point of death, would weigh most on your conscience, confess them, enlarge upon their circumstances and aggravations, bewail them, and plead for pardon through the blood of Christ. What *blessing* is there that you would desire above all other things if you were sure to have your wish? Whatever it be, whether it be the supply of earthly wants, or pardon, grace, peace, or heaven itself—"ask and ye shall have." What are those *mercies* and comforts which others have not, but you are now enjoying? and what are those which you could least of all spare? give hearty and unfeigned thanks for the possession of these. Consider the *wants of your friends*, your immediate relatives, and your acquaintance, and intercede for them. In short, make known your present sins, wants, desires, and mercies, and empty the very thoughts of your hearts in the most easy and obvious expressions.—"Lord, save me, or I perish; Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me; God be merciful to me a sinner;" coming from a full heart, are of prevailing weight and importance: while the most eloquent form of words, which is the mere expression of the lips, is utterly unavailing. Thus you may see that there need not be any difficulty for the poorest and most unlearned to express their desires in prayer. And if

you complain of indisposition and unwillingness to set about the duty? go to the footstool of mercy, confess, in broken sighs and groans, even this indisposition of heart, cast this care upon God, and he will either remove it, or accept those broken sighs, and unexpressed wishes of the heart, which mark the unfeigned desire to find his favour, and to love and serve him. The great thing is to have the heart right with God; then there will be no difficulty in finding matter for prayer. What the heart feels, the mouth will express; and the varying temptations and circumstances of life will thus afford great variety in your prayers. Dwell, therefore, chiefly on those things with which you are most deeply affected, which are warmest in your own hearts.

Prayer for *temporal blessings* should ever be mingled with expressions of entire and unfeigned submission to the will of God. To ask for them thus is not improper, but perfectly right, for many of the highest saints have done so, and it may please God in this way to impart those temporal good things which we need. Hannah asks for children, and God hears her prayer. Hezekiah asks for health, and his sickness is removed. Paul prays for the father of Publius, sick of a fever, and he is healed. Nay, Asa is blamed, because "in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." Only see to it that your desires are purified from all carnal ends, and sanctified to the glory of God; that is, that you desire to serve him more through the things which you request. This makes the end of the prayer spiritual.

Prayer for *spiritual blessings*, for pardon, peace, holiness, love, the favour of God, and the glory of heaven, calls for great earnestness. Take no denial. Say, like Jacob, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Be importunate with your God. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Yet it is possible to desire even spiritual things for merely carnal ends, as with the notion of meriting heaven by them, for human applause, &c. And it is too true, that not only the formalist, but a really devout man in general, may thus sometimes make a carnal prayer, even when asking for spiritual things. Indeed, every prayer that we offer up needs divine forgiveness, and the Saviour's mediation.

Sect. IV.—*On Forms of Prayer.*

Forms of prayer are in themselves not only lawful, but often, even in private, expedient and advantageous. They are a help by which a child may be trained to walk alone; the staff by which weak Christians may, through the divine blessing, be supported; or the strong, occasionally, when labouring under present deadness, or indisposition, be much assisted.

The necessity for forms of prayer must therefore be left to the cases and consciences of individuals. Let it be remembered, that it is not forms of prayer, nor the want of them, that makes real devotion; but the grace of God in Christ Jesus. It is confessed, that many not only do not use forms, but would be straitened in the use of them. Surely Christians ought to have wisdom and charity neither to censure nor to speak disdainfully of those who in earnest seek communion with God, either in the use of forms or without them. "The graces of prayer," says Bennett, "faith, love, humility, contrition, resignation, holy desires, and devout affections, are the life and soul of prayer, and much more to be regarded than this or that mode of outward performance."

Bishop Wilkins, after allowing the use of forms for the young and weaker Christian, both in the family and the closet, and giving him a caution as to the necessity of being "narrowly watchful over his own heart, for fear of that lip service and formality to which, in such cases, we are more especially exposed," adds as follows: "But, for any one so to sit down and satisfy himself with this book prayer, or prescribed form, as to go no farther, this were still to remain in his infancy, and not to grow up in his new nature. This would be as if a man who had once need of crutches, should always afterwards make use of them, and so necessitate himself to a continual impotency.

"And if it be a fault not to strive and labour after this gift, much more is it to jeer and despise it, by the name of 'extempore prayer,' and 'praying by the Spirit,' which expressions are, for the most part, a sign of a profane heart, altogether a stranger to the power and comfort of this duty."

And after giving some directions to help his readers in the performance of prayer, he says, "It will not be difficult to him that shall attempt it after this manner to pray in private without a form. And it is not easy to express what a vast difference a man may find in respect of inward comfort and satisfaction, between those private prayers that are thus conceived from the affections, and those prescribed forms which we say by rote, or read out of books."

Indeed, an ability and readiness to express our thoughts to God, in all the various parts of prayer, in the manner most fit to profit our own souls, and the souls of those who join us, is not only a valuable gift, but a delightful privilege which every Christian should seek to gain.

It has been found useful in private prayer, to consider previously the things which you have to mention, and to put them down under the different parts of prayer. Thus, have you sinned by vain and trifling conversation in company? place that under Confession. Do you fear a particular temptation? place the desire for strength to resist it, under Petition. This previous arrangement has been found to keep the mind more fixed on its work, and it also gives you the advantage of reflecting afterwards on the subjects of your prayer.

It may be observed that the Scriptures supply us with many beautiful models of prayer. Some have found it useful to take a Psalm or a chapter for a form of prayer: such as the 103d Psalm for praise, the 51st Psalm for confession, the 9th of Daniel for intercession, the 12th of Romans for petition. And again, others have found it edifying and profitable daily to repeat the Te Deum. God blesses us in various ways when we endeavour, in simplicity and sincerity, to seek and enjoy his presence, and obtain his favour.

As prayer is a duty of such immense importance, and of such continual recurrence, we shall dwell more fully on the subject matter of our prayers under the following Section:

Sect. V.—*On the various parts of Prayer.*

It will appear, from what has been said already, that no form of prayer can, perhaps, adequately express all our private, personal, and particular wants. It will, therefore, be useful to have our minds so furnished with information on the various parts of prayer, that we may, orderly, and with propriety and readiness, express every want before God.

The parts which are essential in our prayers, may be comprehended under the four heads of Confession, Petition, Intercession, and Thanksgiving. It will be useful to have these four particulars in your mind, and to bring them more or less into every prayer. Perhaps this fourfold division may have been deduced from the passage, (1 Tim. ii, 1,) where the Apostle says, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made." Our sins, our wants, the wants of others, and the mercies of God, are the great subjects for every prayer.

Bishop Wilkins has given a view of the whole subject in the following Analysis of Prayer:

CONFESSION.

Acknowledgment of sins
by Enumeration.
Original, in our inward man.
in our outward man.
Actual, both against Law and Gospel.
National and personal.
Omission and commission.
Thought, word, and deed.
Aggravation of them in general, by multitude and greatness.
in special, the kinds of sin.
in particular, the circumstances.
Punishments of them external, in our bodies, friends, estates, and names.
internal, in respect of blessings, natural and spiritual.
eternal, of loss and pain.

PETITION.

Supplication for ourselves.
Deprecation against the evil of sin.

in respect of its guilt for pardon, and
for the evidence of pardon.
of its power.
against the evil of temptation by our corrupt nature, the Devil, and the world.
against the evil of punishment.
Comprecation.
For spiritual good in the sanctification of our nature, both inward and outward man.
in the obedience of our lives, by the performance, continuance, and increase in the duties both of the Law and the Gospel.
For temporal good, in the provision for us, and protection of us.

Intercession for others.
In general—The Catholic Church.
In special—Ordinary for the nations uncalled, as Infidels, Jews, &c.
the nations called—our own nation, allies.
Occasional, in times of War, Famine, Pestilence, &c.
In particular—Ordinary for all relations, public or political.
private or economical.
friendship, or enmity.
neighbourhood.
Occasional, for the afflicted in mind, body, or estate.

THANKSGIVING.

Mercies to be enumerated.
Ordinary, Temporal, Private, as being, nature, birth, education, preservation, souls, bodies, friends, names, estates, &c.
Public, as fruitful, healthful, and peaceable seasons.
Spiritual, election, redemption, vocation, justification, sanctification, both as to its parts and means, hope of glory.
Occasional, for some particular preservation, recovery, or deliverance of ourselves, or others, in soul, or body.
Mercies to be amplified
Generally by their multitude.
greatness in respect to the giver, and as to the receiver.
their continuance.
particularly by their circumstances, degrees, contraries.

Intermingled with all our prayers should be the most profound, and unfeigned *adoration* of that great God whom we worship. Of every prayer we should aim to be enabled to say with Nebuchadnezzar, "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation."

The order in which you bring forward the various parts of prayer, is of little importance, and may depend on the present state of your mind. Are you burdened by sin? begin by confessing your sins. Are you rejoicing in God's goodness? pour out your heart first in grateful thanksgiving, and then confess your unworthiness of every good. "Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms?"

We will now enlarge upon each of the preceding parts of prayer.

I. CONFESSION.

Under this head, express your present feelings respecting your sinfulness and guilt. In private prayer you should be minute, and full in confessing sins, and the circumstances attending them. The more particular you are in enumerating those sins of which conscience accuses you, the more you dwell on the aggravations of your offences, and condemn, and abase yourself before God, the more He will lift you up.

Acknowledge then His spotless holiness, His almighty power, His perfect justice, and that you cannot approach with comfort or confidence, but through the advocate of sinners, Jesus Christ the righteous: and with the feeling of the publican, cry only for mercy.

Do you feel your continual proneness and propensity to sin? Confess your *original corruption*.—You are a "transgressor from the womb;" "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin;" by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and the child of wrath." Mark also the progress of sin, the sins of childhood and of riper years. You may join Jeremiah in saying, "We have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers even unto this day." Observe how this corruption has defiled your *understanding*, so that you may have often to apply the description, not liking "to retain God in their knowledge," to yourself. Even your *conscience* will, at times, appear to be "past feeling, being seared as with a hot iron." Your *affections* have been fixed on evil things, (Matt. xv, 19,) and you can say from experience, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." The *will* has become a servant to sin, (2 Pet. ii, 19,) "brought in bond-

age," unto corruption. The *memory* has been forgetful of what is good, and retentive only of evil. Heb. ii, 1.

The powers of the soul have thus been corrupted in the fall; nor have the *members of the body* been less estranged from God. The eye is "full of adultery, pride, and envy." The ear "uncircumcised," often open to slander, malignity, and sin; and often shut against divine truth. The tongue is "a world of iniquity, defiling the whole body." The mouth "full of cursing and bitternesss." The feet "swift in the ways of sin." In short, all the members of the body have been yielded up as "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Those who know their own hearts, will be ready to acknowledge, that the seeds of the worst and most aggravated wickednesses which have been practised by other men, lie hid therein, (Matt. xv, 19,) and are only restrained from bursting forth by God's grace. The pious Martyr Bradford, when he saw the poor criminal led to execution, exclaimed, "there, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford." He knew that the same evil principles were in his own heart which had brought the criminal to that shameful end.

But should you, from ignorance of your own heart, be ready to think well of yourself, consider your *actual transgressions*. Go through the ten commandments. See, in the first, how often you have loved the creature more than the Creator, and been among those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." See, in the second, how often you have disregarded, or slightly performed his holy worship. In the third, observe your profanation of his holy name by an irreverent and careless use of it; and of his holy character by unholy words, or an unholy life. In the fourth, notice all your sins relating to the sabbath. In the fifth, your sins respecting your relatives, as parents, brothers, sisters, and others. In the sixth, your evil thoughts of others, remembering, "he that hateth his brother is a murderer." In the seventh, your licentious imaginations—"whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." By the eighth, you may bring to your recollection your partiality or hypocrisy in your dealings and transactions; by the ninth, your duplicity and want of truth; and, by the tenth, your covetousness and love of worldly things.

And in order to discover more of the full extent of your sinfulness, remember, that you are accountable to God, not only for *sins committed*, but, for *duties omitted;* and that your *sins in thought*, as well as those *in word and action*, expose you to the displeasure of God; "the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord."

These are sins more especially against the law of God. But in *sins relating to the Gospel*, you will see more of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and thence have a more abundant cause of penitent confession. Sin, when you have heard and received the Gospel, becomes peculiarly hateful, as it is sin against love itself. Hence, unbelief, impenitence, and self-righteousness, are so burdensome to the mind of the believer, and so much humble him before his God.

Any unbelief in, or doubt about the love and grace of God, after such displays of that love as the Bible discovers, confirmed in so many ways, and by such powerful and numerous witnesses, especially after those gracious deliverances which we have often experienced, is no small sin. It shows the Christian how he merits his Saviour's upbraidings of unbelief and hardness of heart; "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." He will often be disposed to ask himself, "where is that simple reliance on the blood, righteousness, intercession, and grace of Christ, which should give the soul continual peace and joy." He will be humbled also by the mixture of self-righteousness which appears in all his attempts to glorify God. He will often seem to himself, like the Jews, "who, going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God;" and this mark of remaining pride, and self-conceit, will be confessed and bewailed. He will be greatly affected by the hardness and impenitence of his heart. The consideration that the good-

ness of God should have led him to repentance, and yet that he is so little affected, or moved by it, so often apparently totally insensible to it, will sometimes come to his heart with such effect, as to bring him to the throne of grace in the most penitent confessions of a broken and contrite spirit. The peculiarity of our confession in all these things is of great importance to the moving and stirring up of our dull affections.

These *sins* will be seen to be *aggravated* by the consideration of the majesty, mercy, and holiness of that God against whom they have been committed, and of the tendency of all sin. The Christian remembers how it has debased the soul of man, the fairest and most glorious image of God on earth; how it nailed the only Son of God on the tree; how it causes every sorrow here, and eternal sorrow in the life to come.

The *multitude of our sins*, will be another part of our confession; we shall say of them with David, "They are more than the hairs of mine head." "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" or with Ezra, "Our iniquities are increased over us, and our trespasses are grown up to the heavens."

There are also *some particularly grievous sins*, of which conscience justly accuses us. Sins which, however now they may be forgotten, caused peculiar uneasiness and anxiety when they were first committed. I mean sins committed, more or less, against light and knowledge, against the checks of conscience, against the motions of the Spirit of God, though we knew the love of a bleeding Saviour, and the Father of mercies. Sins committed more or less presumptuously and wilfully, deliberately and repeatedly.

Feeling this, you will be ready to *acknowledge the punishment due on account of your sins*, and to say with Jeremiah, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." We have sinned in the enjoyment of every blessing; and it is right and meet we should confess that God would be just in depriving us of them, or punishing us in the use of them.

The imperfection and *defective character of all our obedience*, should also be plainly confessed.—How slight and transient is our repentance!—how slow have we been to be reconciled to those with whom we have been at enmity! Have we yet fully made restitution to those we may have wronged in any way, either as to their character, their comfort, or their property? by negligence and carelessness, sins have been more than half allowed: and how often our watchfulness has become relaxed, and we have thus fallen into temptation! Or again, how little have our evil tempers been subdued! Even "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isa. lxiv, 6.*

The true ground of a right confession of our sins, is a just knowledge of the holy law of God, and of our hearts and lives. Self-examination is then absolutely necessary in order to an enlightened and feeling confession of sin. This will keep us from their mistake who confess little sins much, and altogether neglect greater; who confess those sins which they seldom commit, and neglect those into which they fall continually and frequently.

II. PETITION.

From confessing our sins, we may easily and naturally pass to the earnest request of those blessings which sinners want; and this, either by

A profession of shame and sorrow for so many sins; or, of purpose to renounce our own righteousness; or,

A desire of grace for greater strictness in future; or,

A brief application to ourselves of the many promises of mercy to those that repent and believe.

First, ask for those things which concern *the averting of evil.*

The great thing we need is divine mercy. When David had a peculiar strong sense of his sinfulness upon his mind, he begins his prayer with earnest and repeated petitions for mercy. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the

* A pious person found a great advantage in keeping a list of those sins to which he had found himself specially tempted, and praying daily and particularly for strength against them.

multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." The penitent publican asked only for mercy. We are to approach the throne of grace for this end, that we "may obtain mercy." When the Apostle Paul sums up the benefit which he derived from his conversion, he does it in these words, "I obtained mercy."

Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum;
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit,
Lord, let thy mercy come.

If, confessing our sins, we plead guilty to all the charge that is against us, in a spirit of humiliation and godly sorrow, and in dependence upon the promise, "that whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy," we need not doubt about a favourable reception. Jesus Christ has assured us, "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Sinners need deliverance from the *guilt* and from the *power of sin*. With respect to the *guilt of sin*, seeing that believers are "justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption of Jesus Christ," you should pray for an interest in this justification. Urge the mercy of God, for "with the Lord there is mercy." Plead the merits of Christ, "who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Urge the many and faithful promises—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." "Only acknowledge thine iniquity."

You should also seek for more than mere pardon; I mean a knowledge of being pardoned and accepted in Christ. This is promised, and may, and should, be obtained: ask, then, with David, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Pray that "being justified by faith," you may "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and be "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Nor be satisfied till you can say, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Thus seek to have the full assurance of faith and hope. Heb. vi, 11; x, 22.

With respect to deliverance from the *power of sin*, remember that Jesus Christ is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance as well as remission of sins: no avowedly impenitent sinner is a pardoned sinner. Pray then, that "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, may teach you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world:" pray, that the Saviour may purify you unto himself, that you may be found among his peculiar people, "zealous of good works." Various pleas may be urged to obtain this deliverance. Christ gave himself for this end; and he says, "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

You are surrounded with numerous *temptations*. Pray that God would, "not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear." "The *heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" pray that it may be freed from all guile, deceit, and hypocrisy, purified by faith in Jesus. You are in the ensnaring *world*, pray that you may "not be conformed" to it, but be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." "The *devil* goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour;" ask then that "the God of peace would bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

You have deserved various punishments, and have therefore reason to pray that no evil may befal you, neither any plague come nigh your dwelling; you have reason to ask with David, "cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

To these prayers for the averting of evil, add Petitions for those good things which we need.

Spiritual blessings are the things of first and main importance. The direction is to seek these things *first*. It is not inaptly observed, "the petition for heavenly things is the only key that must open the door to our petition for temporals." The first spiritual blessing is "a new heart and a new spirit." Pray, then, that "you may put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." With what sins does your conscience charge you?

go through all the particulars, and pray for the opposite graces. Are you proud? pray for humility. Are you worldly? for heavenly-mindedness. Is there any grace which you specially need? pray for it. Is there any sin into which you are more apt to fall? pray to be delivered from it. Is there any duty or trial before you? ask for wisdom, grace, and strength, in that particular circumstance. Keep minutes of these things for your own use.

Your heart, in short, is not in a right state, till it be your fixed purpose to devote yourself entirely to God; and you long to have all the powers of your mind, the affections of your soul, and the members of your body wholly given up to his service. St. Paul prays for the Thessalonians, (v, 23) "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He beseeches the Romans to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God." He reminds the Corinthians, "ye are not your own, but bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." The love of God must excite and animate you to this. Pray, then, that "the love of God" may be "shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost."

Love is the fulfilling of the law, the most excellent gift. Desire, then, that you may be taught of God to love others; to "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

Christians who feel that the precious deposit of Christ's glory is in a peculiar way entrusted to them, will especially pray that they may be enabled in all things to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour:" that they may be "holy in all manner of conversation; walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;" that they may "give all diligence, and add to their faith, virtue—knowledge—temperance—patience—godliness — brotherly kindness—and charity."

The Christian need not confine himself to petitions for spiritual blessings. *Temporal blessings* are promised, and may be sought of God. Whatever good thing you may want, relative to your earthly comfort; whatever direction, provision, or protection, you need concerning your body, your calling, your name, your estate, or your friends; whatever your desires be, "in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God." Yet, in asking for temporal blessings it will ever become us not to "seek great things for ourselves:" and to say with our Saviour, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." The prayer of Agur is a suitable prayer for us. "Remove from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Do we not deprive ourselves of many temporal comforts by not bringing our necessities of this kind before God? Many of the examples of prayer which we have in the Scriptures, are for temporal blessings. Only remember to ask for them in submission to the will of God, and the better to enable you to serve him.

Relative duties should ever occupy a place in our prayers. As ministers, that we may be faithful "stewards of the mysteries of God," "by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," making "full proof of our ministry, rightly dividing the word of truth" and in all things showing a "pattern of good works." As hearers and people, that we may esteem "those that may labour among us, and are over us in the Lord, very highly in love for their works' sake;" that we may "receive the truth in the love of it, and be saved."

As husbands, that you may "love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church;" giving "honour unto them as the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life."

As wives, that you may "submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord," "having the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.'

As parents, to "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of

the Lord," teaching the word of God diligently unto them; "chastening thy son while there is hope."

As children, to "honour your father and mother," obeying your "parents well in all things."

As masters, giving unto your "servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven."

As servants, that we may be "obedient to them that are our masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

As magistrates, remembering, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

As subjects, praying "for kings and for all that are in authority," that we "may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," "rendering to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due," "being subject to principalities and powers, obeying magistrates, and being ready to every good work."

This may be considered as comprehending the general course of Petition in private, morning and evening. There are however, occasional and special seasons when we need the help of God, and should obtain it by more than ordinary diligence in prayer.

Have you by any sermon you have heard, or in any other way, been led to feel that you are yet unconverted? give a stated time to pray for conversion. Have you backslidden from God? give more time than ordinary to ask of God to heal and restore you: "remember from whence thou art fallen; repent and do the first works." Are all your Christian graces drooping, languishing, and ready to die? seek, in a special season of prayer, that grace of God, which can alone quicken and restore them to primitive vigour and beauty. Are you about to receive the Lord's supper? prepare for it by retirement, meditation, self-examination, and much prayer. Are you in any respect changing your circumstances or situation, or about to undertake any important work? here is a call on you to seek wisdom of God. Remember the example which our Lord has left us. Before he chose his twelve Apostles, "he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Should you be in great distress either of body or mind, imitate also his example, retire from the world as he did to the garden of Gethsemane, to pour out the heart in secret prayer. Express your wants to God in the same simple manner that Jacob did in his distress.

In short, new and peculiar circumstances require us, if we would escape temptation, danger, and sin, to be then more instant in seeking aid of God. And we may appeal to the experience of Christians, that when they have done so, all has gone on well; difficulties have been removed, or they have been carried comfortably through them; the grace of God has been magnified in their weakness.

Our petitions should be enforced by such arguments as we can use. Of this part of prayer, called *pleading*, we have perpetual examples in the word of God. The conclusion of the Lord's prayer, exemplifies its importance, and shows that the most powerful pleas we can urge, are to be drawn from the attributes and perfections of God. Humble, holy, and earnest pleading with our God, tends to make the desire more fervent, and to strengthen our faith. Observe how Moses pleads, how Joshua intreats, how Jehoshaphat lays the whole case before God.

But let not our prayers be selfish, or confined to our own wants; Christians are "fellow members of one body," all the members of which should ever care for each other. Christians are the "salt of the earth," and should by their intercessions procure its safety and happiness. We proceed, then, to consider another part of our prayers.

III. INTERCESSION.

The Church of Christ, in general, throughout the world, should have the first place in our intercessions. We should "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," that "grace" may "be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," that all that believe in him may

"stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

We should also especially pray for the blessing of God on that particular branch of the Church of Christ to which we individually belong. As members of the Church of England, let us ask "that it may please God to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of his word, and that both by their preaching and living, they may set it forth and show it accordingly." The ministers under whom you are instructed, have a particular claim to your prayers, that they may be "able ministers of the New Testament." Dr. Owen remarks on this subject, "The prayers of the meanest saints may be useful to the greatest apostles, both with respect to their persons and the discharge of their office." Hence it was usual with the apostle to desire the prayers of the churches to whom he wrote. For in mutual prayer for each other consists one principal part of the communion of saints, wherein they are helpful to one another in all times, places, and conditions. It is the especial duty of the church to pray for them who are eminently useful in the work of the ministry.

The increase of faithful ministers generally should be constantly insisted on; "pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his vineyard," that he would give the word, and great may be the company of preachers.

The *enlargement of the Church of Christ* should be another topic to be much brought forward. We should pray for the conversion of *the Jews*, that at length the veil may be removed from their eyes, and they may behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and "look unto" him "whom they have pierced, and mourn."

The *Gentiles* require our prayers. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," is the promise made to Christ, and in him to the Church. While we pray, then, that all Israel may be saved, we should also pray that God would bring in "the fulness of the Gentiles, that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The *nation* to which we belong, should have our prayers; that we may be a people "fearing God and working righteousness." We are taught to pray "for kings, and all in authority." We should ask, also, that God would "instruct our magistrates, and teach our senators wisdom;" that judgment may run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream;" that there may be "peace on earth and good will towards men." Our national sins, our national wants, and our national mercies, will furnish the best, the only true patriot, the Christian, with abundant matter for prayer.

The dear and interesting *family circle* of parents, brothers, sisters, wife, children, servants, Christian friends, (brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh,) and your neighbours, and connections, will daily be gathered and assembled before the throne of grace, andwill be included in the comprehensive and affectionate embrace of Christian prayer. "Though there be no reason," says Mr. Fuller, "why God should save our children, relations, or friends, before others, yet there is a reason why we should seek their salvation, because they are particularly put under our care, or stand in connection with us." David's prayer for his house is suitable for heads of families: "therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue forever before thee; for thou, O Lord hast spoken it; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."

The expansive benevolence of true intercession will also lead you to remember your *enemies*, blessing them that curse and revile you, and doing the best good to those that hate you most. The duty of praying for any with whom we may unfortunately, from whatever cause, be at enmity, is very important. It prepares us to receive ill treatment in a right spirit; to be very slow to suspect others of designing an injury; and, when their design is evident, it disposes us to

return good for evil. O, if every Christian did but pray for others, instead of returning evil for evil, and coldness, suspicion, and jealousy, for fancied injuries, what a change it would produce in the state of the world!

The *circumstances* of others should be considered. Are any afflicted in mind, body, or estate? we should "weep with those that weep," and pray that the chastening, however grievous now, may "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby;" that they may find God "a present help in time of trouble;" and that their affliction may work out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Some may be "dead in trespasses and sins;" others just beginning to know the truth; others "weak in the faith;" others backsliding; and some happy few "strong in the Lord." You will find a blessing to your own soul, in spreading their several cases and circumstances before God in prayer and praise.

You may not be able every day to dwell on all these things, however desirable it may be not wholly to omit them. The example of an eminent servant of Christ, (the Rev. Mr. Romaine,) may here be recommended. "He devoted two hours every Friday to particular intercession with God for his friends. He had their names written down on paper, and used to walk about his room, mentioning them one by one, and specifying their wants as far as he knew them, with earnest supplication."

The duty of praying for friends is so important, that it calls for particular notice; especially when we consider, how little in general we lay to heart the state of our unconverted relatives and friends, and their tremendous exposure to the divine wrath. Let us remember how keen will be the anguish on the death of a relation for whom no prayer nor exertion has been made; and how it will grieve us that many precious opportunities have been lost. While on the other hand, by a constant practise of intercession, we may become emboldened to perform, in a Christian spirit, the difficult duties of solemn warning, reproof, and a full and free declaration of their danger. Remember, that Job's prayer for his friends were to be peculiarly prevalent. God declares, "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept."*

The Scriptures furnish us with many affecting examples of intercessory prayer, as Daniel, for his country; St. Paul for the churches of Christ; and our Lord for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Bishop Hall makes the following encouraging remarks on intercessory prayer: "Every Christian freely lays himself out by prayer for the benefit of his fellow members. Each member of Christ's Church, sues for all. Neither can any one be shut out from partaking the benefit of the prayers of all God's saints upon earth. There is a certain spiritual traffic of piety betwixt all God's children; wherein they exchange prayers with each other, not regarding number so much as weight. Am I weak in spirit and faint in my supplications? I have no less share in the most fervent prayers of the holiest suppliants, than in my own: all the vigour that is in the most ardent hearts, supplies my defects; while there is life in their faithful devotions, I cannot go away unblessed."

The more religion advances in our

* A practise of Col. Gardiner's, is worthy of our remembrance. Doddridge says, when he received a letter from any of his Christian friends which particularly affected his heart, he could not stay till the stated return of his devotional hour, but immediately retired to pray for them and give vent to those religious emotions of mind, which such a correspondence raised. How invaluable was such a friend. Mr. Sheppard, in his valuable "Thoughts on Private Devotion," after stating the importance of daily though brief intercession for those *most* near and dear, gives the following useful hint.—"With respect to other friends, it seems most natural and expedient, that our prayers should be but occasional, in order that they may then be the more prolonged. There are few, even of our best friends, whom we can visit daily. How happy would some be, if they could meet even yearly. But if we made it a rule of piety and kindness daily to offer up particular intercession for *one* individual, or one household, and thus successively for each, these secret visits of the heart would in many instances be far more frequent than our personal intercourse can be. Amidst the inclemency of winter, or in the chamber of sickness, we may still make the swift excursions, and offer the best, though unheard salutations of Christian affection."

hearts, the more time we shall be disposed to give to intercession; which as it is the most disinterested and benevolent part of Christian prayer, so it most likens us to our Divine Master. The Christian has sometimes found the presence of God, and enjoyed that communion with him, in this part of his devotions, which he in vain sought for in confession, petition, or praise."*

After confessing our sins and praying for future blessings for ourselves and for others, and after expressing our confidence of obtaining our requests by our experience of former mercies, we ought to be naturally led to acknowledge those mercies and blessings which we have already received.

IV. THANKSGIVING.

Prayer and praise have been compared to respiration. By prayer the Christian draws in a happy life from heaven; and by praise he breathes it back again to him who gave it.

When the heart is right with God, and he opens our "lips to show forth his praise," thanksgiving is a truly delightful part of our devotion. And here what a boundless subject opens before us! That "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," should condescend to be mindful of man, and visit him, may well excite our adoring wonder and praise.

How numerous are our *temporal blessings!* Our creation, our education, our daily preservation, the repose of the night, and the strength given for the day, demand continued and persevering praise.

God has given us a soul capable of knowing, loving, and rejoicing in him through all eternity. He has given us a body by which we may serve and glorify him. You have, perhaps, the free use of every member of your body, the enjoyment of every sense, and the full possession of every faculty of your mind; and do not these or any of them call for your grateful acknowledgement?

He gives you kind friends, and favour with them. He furnishes you with that provision from day to day, which is needful for you: bread to eat, clothes to cover you, a house in which to dwell, and a fire to warm you. He makes peace in your borders, so that no evil befals you, and gives you health and strength. Or if in any thing it be otherwise, he does not aflict us for his pleasure, but "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness;" and in any case, you are yet "the living, the living to praise him."

What numberless temporal blessings do these things comprehend, and how astonishing is the mercy by which they are granted, and continued to sinful and rebellious creatures! "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

Yet how small are these when compared with *spiritual blessings!* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ." He is the channel, through which the rich stream of mercy flows unto us; and, how needful, how invaluable, are those blessings which he procures and bestows!

"We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Hereby the Almighty, holy, and righteous God, who has declared that he "will not acquit the guilty," is yet "just and faithful to forgive us our sins." And shall we not praise Him who sent his Son to die for man? and Him, who "came into the world to save sinners?" In Christ, God is our portion, and all his perfections are engaged to supply our wants, and make us happy.

Mark the first beginnings and the progress of this happy state.—"God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;" and "in the fulness of time he sent forth his Son," and we were redeemed by his precious blood, "who gave himself a ransom for all."

Then, through his mercy, we were "called with an holy calling, not accord-

* Prayers for the dead are plainly contrary to various statements in God's word, and to the express doctrines of the Church of England. See the Homily on Prayer.

ing to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace:" and, "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, we have been justified freely by his grace, that we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

"Again, as one of his people, you have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit; "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." For this end God has given you his word, his ministers, his sacraments, and intercourse with his people; all the means of grace, and his Spirit to make those means efficient. Is it nothing that you were born and live in a Christian land, in England, "the land of Goshen," the land of spiritual, as well as earthly freedom, peace, and joy? What mercies are included in these things!

You have also in Christ, "the hope of glory;" the lively, the assured hope of future glory: of an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Well may we say with David, "His mercy endureth for ever!"

And, if you cannot feel that you enjoy any of these spiritual mercies, you may yet be thankful for the forbearance and long-suffering of God: "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

These are general mercies common to all Christians, but each one has received special and peculiar mercies, answers to prayers, deliverances from danger, trouble, or distress, protection in journeyings; strength and grace for particular occasions: these things call for thanksgiving.

And with these mercies to ourselves, Christian benevolence and sympathy will teach us also to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," and to praise God for his mercies to his Church and to mankind in general: for that bright day of mercy in which we live, and for all the blessed signs of the times concerning the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom among the Heathen.

Thus shall we be disposed, in reviewing God's mercies, to say, "Many, O Lord, my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order to thee: If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things, and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory."

Yet we must say with the son of Sirach, of this duty of praising our God—"We may speak much, and yet come short; wherefore, in sum, He is all.—When ye glorify God, exalt him as much as you can, for even yet will he far exceed: and when ye exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary: for ye never can go far enough.—Who can magnify *Him* as he is?"

How much do we neglect, or how coldly do we practise the duty of thanksgiving! In reading the 107th Psalm we may observe how readily in trouble all cry to God, without exhortation; but when delivered from their trouble, they need to be earnestly invited to thankfulness. Yet it is often enjoined; we are called to it by the daily providence of God; in nothing do we enjoy God more fully and properly; the discharge of it prepares for greater mercies, the neglect of it brings just rebukes; and it is an excellent preparation for heaven, where the songs of joyful praise are ever ascending to the Father of mercies.

Let us then say with David, "While I live I will praise the Lord, I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being."

I'll praise my Maker with my breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.

We should keep a list of the more remarkable mercies which we have received from our earliest years, and frequently review it. If a person be dwelling perpetually on his wants, he cannot be thankful; but a catalogue of the blessings which God has bestowed upon him, often reviewed, would sweeten the spirit, and tend to fill him with gratitude and love.

Thanksgiving, as well as every other part of prayer, must be offered up in the

name of Christ, acknowledging that all our blessings flow through him, and expecting the acceptance of our praise only on the ground of his mediation.

It will not be possible or advisable to dwell on, or enumerate all the particulars that have been mentioned in every prayer which we make. Yet the leading subjects, and the amplifying of those parts with which your hearts are most affected, will form the substance of your prayers, in "letting your requests be made known unto God, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving."

There is a happy connection between all the parts of prayer; and the full discharge of one leads on to another. It may be thus illustrated. By an ingenious contrivance near some of the collieries, and in other places, where the ground allows of it, the full and empty carriages or vessels being connected together, those which have been emptied, are from time to time raised up an ascent, by the descending of those that have been filled. In this way let the descent of God's mercies and the gifts bestowed on us out of his fulness, in answer to former prayer, raise your empty vessels to receive again and again, from his inexhaustible treasury, all that you need. Say, with David, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

It may be advantageous not always to confine yourselves to the same parts of worship, or the same order. Watts enumerates the following eight parts of prayer: Invocation, Adoration, Confession, Petition, Pleading, Self-dedication, Thanksgiving, and Blessing.

We may occasionally be assisted in our devotion by these more extended and enlarged parts and divisions; only take heed, lest in the use of them, our prayers should become too artificial, and be merely the work of the head instead of the feeling of the heart. Yet Watts justly observes, that if young Christians did not give themselves up to a loose habit of speaking what is uppermost, but attempted to learn the holy skill of prayer, by a recollection of its several parts, and disposing their thoughts into a suitable method, they would be more successful in attaining this great gift.

These parts of prayer will be more plain by the following example of each part from the Scriptures.

INVOCATION.

"Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for unto thee will I pray."

ADORATION.

"Thou art God, and none else; thy name alone is Jehovah, the Most High—Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

CONFESSION.

"I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

PETITION.

"Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me.

"Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary."

PLEADING.

"For thy mercies' sake, O Lord, save me. Our fathers cried unto thee, and were delivered."

SELF-DEDICATION.

"I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. I have sworn, and I will peform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."

THANKSGIVING.

"My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.

"O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name, who forgiveth all thy sins, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies."

BLESSING.

"Blessed be his glorious name for ever.

"Now unto the King eternal, immor-

tal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

O that every reader might be inclined, and by the Spirit of God enabled, to enter on a full and enlarged practice of private prayer! A continual spirit of devotion is the highest attainment of man; it is the root which draws up the sap and life of the tree of righteousness, and thus causes it to bring forth all that fruit which glorifies God and benefits man. Hence, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and temperance, all godliness, and all true excellence. Believe me, it will be worth many sacrifices and struggles to gain the spirit of prayer, guarding againt trusting in your own strength and self-righteousness, and remembering, in prayer we put off our own righteousness and pride, our wisdom and riches, and confess our sinfulness and poverty.* We shall then find constant prayer bring in the richest return of all our labours and employments.

While this account of the various parts of prayer has been given, it is readily admitted that the purest private prayer is above form and method. It is the expression of a full heart, pouring out the inmost desires of the soul before God, in the most natural and obvious words.

It was a saying of the Martyr Bradford, "that he would never leave a duty, till he had brought his heart into the frame of the duty; he would not leave confession of sin, till his heart was broken for sin; he would not leave petitioning for grace, till his heart was quickened and enlivened in a hopeful expectation of more grace; he would not leave the rendering of thanks, till his heart was enlarged with the sense of the mercies which he enjoyed, and quickened in the return of praise."

And surely every part of our duty, as it is brought before us in the word of God, shows us both our guilt and our weakness. But still the perfection of that rule must be declared. It is calculated to stimulate us to higher efforts, and to humble us in lower prostration of soul, under a sense of our so frequently coming short of the mark set before us.

SECT. IV.—*Brief Observations on the Lord's Prayer.*

The Prayer which our Lord gave to his disciples is not only a perfect form of prayer, but also an admirable pattern and guide. It is in one place introduced to our notice, thus, "When ye pray, say," and in another, "After this manner pray ye." It is so full and comprehensive, that we generally find, after our longest prayers, that there is something asked for in the Lord's prayer, which we had not before requested.

Its method is simple and clear. It consists of three parts:

I. *An Introduction*, expressing the goodness and greatness of Him to whom we speak.

"Our Father, which art in heaven."

II. *Six Petitions*, three of which have a more immediate respect to the glory of God.

1. "Hallowed be thy name.
2. Thy kingdom come.
3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

And the three remaining, more immediately respect our own personal wants; temporal and spiritual.

1. "Give us this day our daily bread.
2. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.
3. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The four first of these petitions, are for the obtaining of good, and the two last for the averting of evil.

III. *A Conclusion*, not only acknowledging the perfections of God, but most powerfully pleading them as a reason why our prayers should be heard.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

Every part of prayer is comprehended in this pattern.

* "Prayer is a sweet travelling and trafficking of the soul betwixt emptiness and fulness, betwixt want and all-sufficiency, and betwixt our inability to help ourselves and his ability to help us."—A. Gray, on Prayer.

Confession is plainly implied in every request, for the requests suppose either our weakness or our sinfulness in the particulars desired.

Petition forms the main substance of this prayer.

Intercession is also involved in the whole; in the three first petitions more directly, and the remaining petitions by their being in the plural number—give *us*,—forgive *us*,—lead *us*, &c.

Thanksgiving is expressed in the conclusion, and there is in the petitions an implied acknowledgment of all the great perfections of God.

This prayer is too generally used as a vain repetition. It is worthy of remark, that at the very time our Lord gave it, he expressly warned his disciples against vain repetitions.

Many things may be learned respecting prayer, from this pattern.

1. The filial confidence and reverence with which we ought to approach God.
2. The expediency of method and order in our prayers.
3. The necessity of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.
4. The lawfulness of then asking for temporal blessings.
5. The importance of the temper in which we pray: an unforgiving temper obtains not God's forgiveness.
6. The duty of praying much for others.
7. The excellence of simplicity of expression.
8. The powerful pleas with which we may urge our petitions.

In this prayer we are not taught to ask in the name of Christ; and the reason may be, that when it was given, Christ's atonement had not actually taken place, nor his intercession as a risen Saviour began. Therefore our Lord says, "hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name—at that day ye shall ask in my name."

SECT. VII.—*On answers to Prayer.*

Our too general neglect of looking for answers to what we ask, shows how little we are in earnest in our petitions. "None ask in earnest," says Trail, "but they will try how they speed. There is no surer and plainer mark of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get by prayer."—A husbandman is not content without the harvest; a marksman will observe whether the ball hits the target; a physician watches the effect of the medicine he gives; one who writes or applies to another for any temporal good eagerly expects an answer; and shall the Christian be careless about the effect of his labour?

Every prayer of the Christian, made in faith according to the will of God, for that which God hath promised, offered up in the name of Jesus Christ, and under the influence of his Spirit, whether for temporal or for spiritual blessings, is, or will be, fully answered. God always answers the general design and intention of his people's prayers, in doing that which, all things considered, is most for his own glory, and their spiritual and eternal welfare. As we never find that Jesus Christ rejected a single supplicant who came to him for mercy; so we believe that no prayer made in his name will be in vain. "The answer of prayer may be approaching, though we discern not its coming. The seed in winter that lies under ground, is taking root in order to a spring and harvest, though it appear not above ground, but seems dead and lost."

The time, or the mode of granting the request may vary indeed from our wishes; but yet the prayer made as above stated is heard, the desire so put up is fulfilled.

Bishop Taylor observes, "As for those irregular donations of good things which wicked persons ask for, and have, they are either no mercies, but instruments of cursing and crime; or else they are designs of grace, intended to convince them of their unworthiness, and so, if they become not instruments of their conversion, they are aggravations of their ruin."

In asking for *spiritual blessings*, for repentance, faith, humility, holiness, love, &c. we are sure of having the particular request, for this is the will of God, even your sanctification. Yet in these things

the way of granting the request may, at first sight, seem like a denial.

Remarkable, sometimes, are the ways in which prayers for spiritual blessings are answered. We pray for an increase of faith, patience, resignation, or other Christian graces: and our trials, instead of being removed, seem greatly aggravated. The clouds grow darker and darker. But the secret supports of the Holy Spirit being afforded, we do not sink under our burden. And in the midst of all these trials, the very things which we asked are given. There is no exercise for faith when all is smooth; no room for patience and resignation when there is no suffering; the very graces which we sought, need difficulties, sorrows, and trials, in order to be manifested, exercised, and granted. Often the very sentence of death is put upon all our hopes, before they are realized. The extremity of suffering is the point of our deliverance. Let the tried Christian, then, attend to Cowper's exhortation:

> Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head.

It is the main desire of every Christian, in a proper state of mind, that the will of God be done; and when he asks for *temporal blessings*, he does it with full purpose of heart, not to have his own wishes accomplished, farther than as they concur with the will of God, which will, he is assured, ever designs his supreme happiness. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart." If you are really delighting in the Lord, the desire of your heart will be mainly for spiritual things; and for temporal things it will be with the reservation, "thy will be done." This petition whether expressed, or only understood, may often be a prayer that your previous requests for temporal good may not be granted, and thus there may be an opposition in your requests. We lose not by the denial of meaner petitions, when God sets them aside to give greater blessings. This appears to be the meaning of the following passages. "He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God." And again, "this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." No Christian wishes for the answer which the carnal Israelites received. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." If then the Christian be denied the particular request, his real prayers may receive an express answer in his own sanctificaction, and in the accomplishing of God's holy will; just as a sick man's real desire is accomplished, if he be ultimately made well, even though the medicine or the mode of cure expose him to the things which he dislikes.

But perhaps you ask, How may I know whether my prayers have been answered or not? Sometimes the case is so obvious that it cannot be mistaken—Jehoshaphat prays, and he is deliverd from his enemies; Ezekiah prays, and he is delivered from sickness; Jonah prays, and he is delivered from the belly of the whale; the Church prays, and Peter is delivered from Herod. The following, among many others, are examples of answers to particular requests. Gen. xxv, 21; 1 Chron. v, 20; 2 Chron. xxxiii, 13; Ezra, viii, 23.

At other times prayers are answered, rather in the increase of grace to bear the affliction, than in its removal, as in the case of Paul's thorn in the flesh. "There are," says Gee, in his Treatise on the Answer of Prayer, "four ways of God's answering prayers. By giving the things prayed for presently, (Dan. ix, 23,) or by suspending the answer for a time, and giving it afterwards, (Luke, xviii, 7;) or by withholding that mercy which you ask from you, and giving you a much better mercy in the room of it, (Deut iii, 24, compared with Deut. xxxiv, 4, 5;) or lastly, by giving you patience to bear the loss or want of it," (2 Cor. xii, 9.)

Many examples, in modern times, might be given of answers to prayer, so plain that they cannot be mistaken. Indeed, where is there a Christian who

cannot, from his own history, bring instances of this! The prayers of the Martyr Latimer, and their answer, are very observable. There were three principal matters for which he prayed; 1st. That God would give him grace to stand to his doctrine until death. 2d. That God would of his mercy restore his Gospel to England once again—repeating and insisting on the words, "once again," as though he had seen God before him, and spoken to him face to face. 3d. That God would preserve Elizabeth; with many tears desiring God to make her a comfort to this comfortless realm of England. All these requests were most fully and graciously answered.*

The increase of any Christian grace, poverty of spirit, mourning for sin, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, quietness of mind, perseverance, in prayer, is, to the real Christian, of itself, a most delightful answer to prayer. Whatever other things may have been denied, if these are given, the corresponding promises are secured to you, and the greatest blessings have been granted. If we can say with David, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," we may see the prayer answered in the strengthening of the soul, though the particular request be denied.

It is said that our Lord "was heard in that he feared;" but this was not by the removal of his sufferings, but by his having strength suited to his stupendous woe.

The due *use of means* must be attended to, if we wish for answers to our prayers. There is a species of enthusiasm, not uncommon, and to which young or ignorant professors of religion are exposed, that is, to expect the blessing desired in prayer without any effort or exertion on our parts. But in the Bible you may constantly mark how those who earnestly prayed, used the most likely means to effect their desires. Though Jacob passes the night in prayer, he still in the morning takes the best means to pacify his brother Esau. Asa sets the battle in array, as well as cries to God, "we rest on thee." Bishop Hall says of Moses, when Israel was about to contend with Amalek, "I do not hear Moses say to his Joshua, Amalek is come up against us, it matters not whether thou go against him, or not; or, if thou go, whether alone or in company; or, if accompanied, whether in many or few, strong or weak; or, if strong men, whether they fight or no; I will pray on the hill: but he says, 'choose us out men, and go fight.' Then only can we hope when we have done our best; and though means cannot effect that which we desire, yet God will have us use the likeliest means on our part to effect it. Prayer, without the use of means, is a mockery of God."

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." Means being required, both in God's word and by the course of his providence, neglect of them is not faith but unbelief. The patient who trusts his Physician's skill, will carefully follow his directions. Believing prayer does not render exertion unnecessary, but makes it effectual; giving a divine power and blessing to that which was before a merely weak and human effort. And the right way is neither to use unlawful means, nor lawful ones irregularly, nor trust either in them, or in our prayers; but humbly and dilligently to go on in the path of duty, using those means which seem right and profitable, and trusting only in God our Saviour to bring the thing to pass, and that in his own way. His wisdom, power, and love, are infinite. His ways are often dark and mysterious to weak and fallible man; but it will ever be found in the end, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

But supposing after having done all, and waited long, our prayers are still denied, what are we then to conclude?

The *denial* of prayer is always in mercy to the children of God. It was in kindness to David that his child was taken away. He earnestly prayed for the life of one who would have been a living monument of his shame. He eagerly longed for the preservation of Absalom; but in mercy the rebellious son, who might have ruined him, was cut off. And how frequently is the denial spiritually useful.

* See Fox's Life of Latimer.

Goodwin observes, "often the very denial breaks the hard heart, and brings a man nearer to God, and puts him on searching into his ways, and estate, and to see what should be amiss in his prayer; which alone is a great mercy, and better than the thing; seeing that by the loss of that one thing, he learns to pray better, and so to obtain a hundred better things afterwards."

We lose many proofs of God's faithfulness and grace, his tenderness and compassion, by not marking the answers to our prayers in these and in other respects.

Gee thus enumerates the ends for which God may for a season hide himself from the prayers of his people.

"In reference to *themselves*—to increase their assiduity and ardency in prayer—to fit them for the mercy prayed for—to exercise and try their faith, patience, love, sincerity, of sanctification, and obedience—to manifest himself to them more fully, either in or after the delay—to make the benefit prayed for more precious and welcome, and useful when it comes—to remove the impediments of their receiving or enjoying the mercy sought for—and to raise up their thoughts, their faith, hope, love, and longings, to the second appearing of Christ. In reference to *others*—to make up and bring in the number of those for whom the mercy is proposed—to complete the account of the church's sufferers and sufferings—to give others an example of patient and confident waiting upon God—and for the greater dismay and confusion of the adversary."

When your *prayers* are *not answered*, let it lead you to self-examination. Perhaps the prayer may have been answered in a way you have not thought of. Perhaps you were desiring something that would only foster ambition or pride, or were merely considering ease or comfort, without regard to spiritual edification. Or look for the cause of it in your neglect of Christ's intercession, or your ingratitude for former answers: question your own faith, the fervency of your desires, the purity of your end, the propriety of the manner in which you have offered up your petitions:* yes, any thing rather than God's faithfulness: "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Again, God will not be enquired of by those who have an idol in their hearts. If you are living in any habitual sin, you cannot expect that your prayers should be heard.

When your *prayers* are *answered*, let it assure you of God's faithfulness and love; let it encourage you to renew your prayers, to abound therein, to seek God more constantly, to depend more simply on his strength, to lay yourself out more entirely for him, and never to fear undertaking any thing in his cause. Let it excite you to abound in thanksgiving and praise.

May what has been stated encourage you not only to hope but patiently to wait for, and attentively to observe God's answers to prayer. Keep from such sins as would provoke him to deny your requests, and go on striving and praying, asking, seeking, and knocking, till you are at length safely landed on the heavenly shore; you will then find every prayer fully answered, every wish accomplished, and your souls "filled with all the fulness of God."

Sect. VIII.—*The Frequency of Private Prayer.*

The Scriptures do not give express directions how often we ought to pray, farther

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* There are two duties connected with the efficacy of prayer, that are, it is to be feared, too little practised or insisted on—Alms and Fasting. The *alms* of Cornelius ascended with his prayers to God; "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Acts. x. 4. See also Prov. xxi, 13.

Parr observes, "Religious Fasting is also a notable help to prayer, and is often commended to us in the word of God. It is a voluntary abstaining from dinner, or supper, or both, as our bodies will bear, and from all delicacies for one day, or more, undertaken to make us more fit for prayer and repentance. The ends in our fasting are, 1st. A fitting ourselves to prayer, that we may be the more lively and earnest; and 2dly. That it may be a help and testimony of our sorrow for sin, and of our humiliation before God.',—Only herein ever take heed to avoid superstition, Rom. xiv, 17. and any opinion of merit, 1 Cor. viii. 8. and to fast from sin. Isa. lviii. 5, 6; Jer. xiv. 12.

than by general intimations and the examples of others. We ought always to be in the spirit of prayer. But we are speaking now of stated seasons for retired prayer: and of this we say, that at least you ought to pray twice every day. David says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: and to show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up" And again, "let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."—Morning and evening devotions, then, every day, should never be omitted; and, speaking generally, unless you are prevented by circumstances out of your control, they cannot be neglected without much damage to your soul. Prayer has been compared to a key, that in the morning opens the treasury of God's mercies; and in the evening shuts us up under his protection and safeguard. It has ever been found, that as we have sought God in spirit and in truth in the morning, so the rest of the day has prospered.

The habit of early rising is of great importance to the due discharge of morning prayer. O how many precious hours do indolent Christians lose; while those who are more self-denying and diligent, are gaining the favour of God and enjoying communion with him.*

Our first waking thoughts should be directed towards God; copying David's example, who says, "When I awake I am still with thee." I would advise you to be longest in your morning devotions, when your spirits are lively and vigorous, and undisturbed by the events of the day; in the evening, when you are tired and spent with its labours, be shorter, and endeavour to attend to this duty some time before you retire to rest. If your evening devotions are deferred till every thing else is done, there is great danger of their being often imperfectly performed, if not altogether omitted.

The Rev. Mr. Simeon remarks, "It is too generally found, that many, instead of transacting their business with God while their faculties are alive, stay till exhausted nature is become incapable of any energetic exertion, and then hurry over some form of prayer, as a school boy does his task, without feeling one word they utter. Even this is too favourable a representation of the prayers of some others, who stay till they have lain down upon their bed, and then fall asleep in the midst of their devotions. As for praying in the morning, they have no time for that; the concerns of the past or present day have pre-occupied their mind; and if they offer two or three cold petitions while they are dressing, or before they leave their room, they think this quite sufficient."

Regular devotional exercises, twice every day, in secret, are insisted on as a plain duty. More than this is strongly recommended. Christians in general would find, what many do find in their own practise, a great advantage in obtaining a few leisure moments for retired and stated prayer in the middle of the day. The word of God gives us encour-

* Col. Gardiner set an admirable example. "He used constantly to rise at four in the morning, and to spend the time till six, in secret exercises of devotion, reading, meditation and prayer; in which last he contracted such a fervency of spirit, as I believe few men living ever obtained. This certainly tended very much to strengthen that firm faith in God, and reverend animating sense of his presence, for which he was so eminently remarkable, and which carried him through the trials and services of life with such steadiness and such activity; for he indeed endured and acted as always 'seeing him who is invisible.' If at any time he was obliged to go out before six in the morning, he rose proportionably sooner; so that when a journey or a march has required him to be on horseback by four, he would be at his devotions at farthest by two. He likewise secured time for retirement in an evening: and that he might have it the more at command, and be the more fit to use it properly, as well as the better able to rise early the next morning, he generally went to bed about ten: and during the time I was acquainted with him, he seldom ate any supper, but a mouthful of bread, with one glass of wine. In consequence of this, as well as of his admirably good constitution, and the long habit he had formed, he required less sleep than most persons I have known: and I doubt not but his uncommon progress in piety was in a great measure owing to these resolute habits of self-denial."—See Doddridge's life of Col. Gardiner.

aging examples of those who have done so. "Evening, morning, and at noonday, will I pray, and and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice." Daniel, in a time of great danger, his windows being opened in his chamber, "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he aforetime did." Here was the secret spring of the eminency of these holy men. They were much in prayer. Besides, men's thoughts and affections will necessarily be most vigorous and lively about those things in which they are incessantly employed, and they are able to do that best which they do most frequently. This is very evident in the common affairs of life. Indeed we see this to be the case, as in prayer itself our thoughts so continually run out after our daily and more constant occupations.

Many objections are ever ready to start up in the natural heart, when we are called on to form a determined resolution to attend to any holy duty. But let us say as one said, "If the house were about to fall down, I must pray;" meaning that the salvation of his immortal soul was a matter of such infinitely superior magnitude to every earthly concern, that whatever were the consequence, he must attend to that.

Respecting the time to be allotted to prayer, no general rule can be given. Many have the command of their whole time, and from them more is reasonably expected. Surely an hour or two in twenty-four is not too much for them. A real love to God, and a due sense of the value of his favour, will make a cheerful and a liberal giver. Others, as servants, who have hardly any time that they can call their own, are yet bound to redeem some for God. Dr. Doddridge remarks, "that there are few who, with proper care, might not have half or three quarters of an hour at command for reading the Scriptures and prayer, morning and evening." Let there be a willing mind, and a way will be found."

"Let those," says Bishop Horne, "who retire in the middle of the day to adorn their persons, take the opportunity of putting on the ornaments of grace, and renewing the spirit of their minds."

In many cases and situations it will be impossible to retire to your private chamber for a mid-day prayer; but in a walk, in your house, or in your business, your heart may statedly retire at a particular season for a few leisure moments from the world, and hold communion with its God. Only try.

Some of the last words which an African youth (very dear to the writer, and now, he doubts not, in heaven) told one of those about him, were, "I used to pray three times every day, and now I find that it was good—do you mind to do the same."*

The importance of this regular and frequent devotion will be evident from the consideration of the great concerns which we then have to transact with God. "I have," says Baxter, "more and greater business to do with God in one day, than with all the world in all my life. My business with God is so great, that if I had not a Mediator to encourage and assist me to do my work, and procure my acceptance, the thoughts of it would overwhelm my soul. Therefore let man stand by; I have to do with the great and eternal God, and with him I am to transact in this little time the business of my endless life. I am to seek of God, through Christ, the pardon of all my great and grievous sins; and if I speed not, woe unto me that ever I was born! I have some hopes of pardon, but intermixed with many perplexing fears. I have evidences of grace, but they are exceedingly blotted; I want assurance that God is my reconciled Father, and that he will receive me to himself when the world forsakes me. I have many languishing graces to be strengthened; and, alas! what rooted, inveterate, vexatious corruptions to be cured! Can I look into my heart, into such an unbelieving and earthly heart, into such a proud and peevish heart, into such a perplexing and trembling heart, and not discern how great my business is with God? Can I survey my sins, feel my wants, and sink under my weaknesses? Can I look forward, and see how near my time is to an end? Can I think of

* See Memoir of Simeon Wilhelm.

the malice and diligence of Satan; the number, power, and policy of my enemies; the many dangerous snares and temptations that are around me, and my own ignorance, weakness, and unwatchfulness, and not know that my greatest business is with God?"* Surely such views should lead us to frequent prayer.

Sect. IX.—*The Reward of Private Prayer.*

"Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." While this holds out to us the certain reward of secret devotion, it also discovers to us a delightful view of the glory and perfections of God. Heathen nations fancy that the God of heaven and earth is too far off, or too great, to attend to the petitions of men—that he is too determined, and too careless, or too powerful to be moved by them, and that therefore they must pray to inferior deities. But in what a much sublimer light do the Christian Scriptures lead us to think of God! He is every where present—"in him we live, move, and have our being:" He "performeth all things for us;" He "seeth in secret." Ogden says on this subject, "How magnificent is this idea of God's government! that he inspects the whole and every part of the universe every moment, and orders it according to the counsels of his infinite wisdom and goodness, by his almighty will! whose thought is power, and his acts ten thousand times quicker than the light; unconfused in a multiplicity exceeding number, and unwearied through eternity."

Christian! when you enter your closet for private prayer, you are going into the presence chamber of this great King of kings; you are about to hold intercourse with him in the character of a tender father. He is indeed every where present, but he manifests his presence to those that seek him. He bestows on them his grace and blessing. O the dignity and glory of the Christian! O the vanity of the world! O the astonishing blindness and perverseness of man, who can think slightly of his richest privilege and his highest honour!

The advantages of prayer, generally, have already been pointed out; but consider farther—Intercourse with God in secret prayer *has a transforming efficacy.* When Moses had been with God in the mount, the skin of his face shone. Something of that glory which had been then manifested to him, remained with him. And thus the Christian often comes from his closet, with some of the beams of heavenly light and glory, shining, as it were, in his countenance. Coming into the world is sometimes to him like coming back into a lower sphere, into a new society. He has been holding converse with the unseen world, and he returns invigorated and refreshed for every duty. "Our graces will languish and die, our spirits grow heavy and dull, unless we are refreshed and revived by constant intercourse with the great paternal Spirit." Grove says, "The effects of Christian retirement will appear in the sweet composure of the passions, the evenness and affability of the behaviour, the charitableness of the temper, and the purity and tranquillity of the life." The retired violet, which hides itself in the shade, gives one of the sweetest scents, and the lowly Christian who is constant in secret prayer, diffuses a holy feeling, a heavenly atmosphere around him.

This blessed employment in secret *raises the Christian above anxiety about temporal things.* A holy intercourse with his Maker gives him a fixedness and serenity which nothing else can bestow, and hardly any thing can discompose. It prepares him for all events, and fills him with a noble contempt for all the sinful pleasures and pursuits of a world lying in wickedness. It is like a sure anchor, safely fixed in solid ground, which, though unseen above, keeps the vessel steadfast and secure amid the tumultuous waves and the stormy tempest.

The devout Christian, praying in secret, *makes rapid advances in the divine life.* "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk

* See Baxter's Converse with God.

and not faint." Sins with which the indolent and careless Christian is contending to his life's end, soon yield to continued fervent prayer. Prayer gains for us that strength which enables us to surmount every difficulty, and removes every obstacle in our way to Sion. Are our affections toward God and Christ becoming cold? prayer is as a fire to which we must approach, and doing so, we shall perceive a gentle warmth insensibly overspread us, and our benumbed powers will acquire fresh energy and vigour.

It was the daily practise of the eminent physician Boerhaave, through his whole life, as soon as he rose in the morning, which was generally very early, to retire for an hour to private prayer, and meditation on some part of the Scriptures. He often told his friends, when they asked him how it was possible for him to go through so much fatigue with such patience and quietness, that it was this which gave him spirit and vigour in the business of the day. This he therefore recommended as the best rule which he could give.

Private Prayer is *an engine of greater power than all human means put together.** The greatest of earthly monarchs, neglecting prayer, has not that power to glorify God, benefit man, and secure his own happiness, which the humble and praying Christian has. The prayer of a poor, destitute, and afflicted Christian, in the name of Christ, may turn the hearts of kings and princes, save his country, raise up pious ministers, secure a blessing to their labours, send the Gospel to the heathen, and advance the kingdom of Christ in the world. Prayer has an advantage above alms, and every other good work, which can benefit only a few, while faithful prayer can help all. It is also a resource of which man cannot deprive you; he may despoil, blind, and maim, imprison, or otherwise injure you; but he cannot keep you from prayer. Observe the power of prayer in the example of Elijah. He was "a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

It makes us fruitful in every good work.—"I reckon it," says Bennett, "matter of common experience among good men, that they find themselves more or less disposed, and fit for their respective duties and service, according as their diligence, constancy, and seriousness in secret prayer are more or less." The root that produces the beautiful and flourishing tree, with all its spreading branches, verdant leaves, and refreshing fruit, that which gains for it sap, life, vigour and fruitfulness is all unseen; and the farther and the deeper the roots spread beneath, the more the tree expands above. Christians, if you wish to prosper, if you long to bring forth all the fruit of the Spirit, strike your roots deep and wide in private prayer. That faith and support, that strength and grace, which you seek of God in secret, that it may be exercised in the hour of need, God will in that hour give it you before men.

Mr. Scott says, "depend upon it every thing will prosper in the event in a very near proportion to our earnestness and perseverance in prayer: but negligence here will be followed by a declension perhaps almost unperceived in all other respects, and will make way for temptations, falls, corrections, darkness, and inward distresses: if like Jacob we wrestle with God and prevail, we shall eventually prevail in all our other conflicts."

It *will be rewarded openly.*—Our Lord does not in these words promise the very thing which you request; but your Father will reward you; he will give you a free, a full return, a gracious retribution, evidently, though not perhaps identically. How manifestly before all men Hannah was rewarded, when the name of her son Samuel (meaning "asked of God") told all Israel, and tells the Church in every age, that God hears and answers prayer! How openly were Jacob's secret

* "Admirable is the power of prayer. It calms the surges of a troubled spirit—shuts lions' mouths—opens prison doors—beats the fiercest enemies—nay, arrests the impending judgments of God." Reading's Guide to the Holy City.

prayers answered, when Esau publicly received him so graciously! Our heavenly Father will also, before men and angels, hereafter reward thy secret devotion. Now it is unknown to man, but it will all be known, and known by the greatness of its reward. Every tear of godly sorrow, shed in secret, will then be a brilliant gem in the crown of glory surrounding the brow of the Christian. The Christian's reward comes from a Father of infinite power, riches, wisdom, and love; and therefore cannot be a small reward, or an unsatisfying portion.

May every reader then be encouraged to begin or more constantly to practise, and persevere in this sacred duty. However dull our spirits, however wearied our body, however wandering our minds, let us never wholly omit this duty, never put it off with a vain excuse to another season. To do so is Satan's temptation. It is better to attempt to pray in the best way you can than not to pray at all. And you will sometimes find the Lord assist you with the supply of his Spirit, enliven your soul, fix your mind, and draw and raise your heart to himself.

One of Melancthon's correspondents gives this account of Luther's private devotions, in one of the most trying and critical times in the course of the Reformation. "I cannot enough describe the cheerfulness, constancy, faith and hope of this man in these trying and vexatious times. He constantly feeds these good affections by a very diligent study of the word of God. Then, not a day passes in which he does not employ in prayer, three, at least, of his very best hours. Once I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious Lord! what spirit and what faith there is in his expressions! He petitions God with as much reverence as if he was actually in the divine presence, and yet with as firm a hope and confidence as he would address a father or a friend. 'I know,' said he, 'thou art our Father, and our God, therefore I am sure that thou wilt bring to nought the persecutors of thy children. For shouldst thou fail to do this, thine own cause being connected with ours, would be endangered. It is entirely thine own concern: we, by thy providence, have been compelled to take a part. Thou, therefore, wilt be our defence.' While I was listening to Luther praying in this manner at a distance, my soul seemed on fire within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, and yet with so much gravity and reverence; and also to hear him in the course of his prayer, insisting on the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he were sure his petitions would be granted." (See Milner's Hist. of the Church of Christ, vol. 5.) No wonder that Luther was such a blessing to the world. All men of great usefulness to the Church have much abounded in prayer.

But why speak we of others: let us notice only the extraordinary spirit of devotion which adorned *our blessed Saviour*. This part of his character has been well described: when twelve years of age, he was engaged in the Temple with the Doctors, in his "Father's business." When he entered on his public ministry, he committed himself in solemn prayer to God. Before he chose his twelve Apostles, as well as at his transfiguration, he spent a considerable time in devotion. During his ministry, he resorted to the synagogue on the Sabbath. He devoutly referred every act of his life and ministry, his mission, his doctrine, his miracles, his sufferings, his resurrection, to the will and appointment of his Father. He encouraged a spirit of prayer in his disciples, by commanding them to pray, and by supplying them with a model of prayer. He sanctioned these encouragements to prayer by his own example; by "going out into a desert to pray;" by rising up early, and by "continuing all night in prayer to God;" by pouring out earnest and frequent addresses to his heavenly Father, as new exigencies arose; by his solemn intercessory supplication, previous to his last sufferings; by his "strong crying and tears" during his agony; and by commending his soul to his Father as he expired on the cross."*

If the Saviour of the world thus prayed, and was heard, and carried through his stupendous work, can we have a stronger motive to abound in prayer?

* See Daniel Wilson's Sermons.

CHAPTER IV.

On Public Worship.

MANY are the advantages, and great is the necessity of private prayer; but it will not be difficult to shew, that public worship is also a duty of plain and vast importance.

We will consider, first, the duty and advantage of public worship; and then the mode of duly performing the duty.

The assembling of ourselves together is required in the Scriptures of all Christians. The Apostle exhorts us to it as a great means of strengthening our love to God and man; "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." The invitation runs, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." "Come into his courts; Oh worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The direction is, "Praying always, with all prayer." It is plainly pointed out as a means to avert God's judgments; "call a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people." These things, and the practice of all holy persons, from the time when "men began to call on the name of the Lord," with the example of our Lord and his disciples, give us sufficient scriptural authority for the practice of public worship. Nor should we forget the appointment of a particular day for the solemn worship of God, and of a particular place for the Jewish nation, the various regulations, and directions respecting their public worship; all which things show that it is a divine ordinance pleasing and acceptable to God.

Public worship is *a suitable and proper expression of homage to our Creator.* "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" and it is just and right that we should publicly and unitedly "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." We all depend upon him, and it is right that we should join in acknowleding this, and praying to him. We have in common sinned against him, and right it is that we should in common confess our sins before him. We need the same supplies, we have received the same mercies, and may therefore unite in the same prayers and praises. Reasonable and immortal creatures are engaged in an object worthy of their nature and character, when they unite together to "exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool. The angels and spirits of just men made perfect, unite in surrounding the throne of glory with hymns and praises. We are to do his will "on earth as it is done in heaven;" If we, then, expect to join the society above, we should obtain a meetness on earth for their blissful employment.

It is also *a public testimony and profession of our religion.* We hereby show "whose we are, and whom we serve." The religion of a nation is known by its worship. "All people walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever." If heathen nations assemble to worship idols; if Mahomedans meet to worship an unknown God, and honour Mahomet; let Christians meet to worship the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of the spirits of all flesh;" and thus give a public avowal of their being the disciples of Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Saviour. By withdrawing from the public assembly of his people, you do in effect own yourself not to belong to those who love and fear God, and shall dwell with him for ever. Persons of the greatest piety have ever been most remarkable for their attachment to public worship. Look with this view at the Psalms of David. See Psalms xlii. lxiii. lxxxiv.

Public worship is *attended with some peculiar advantages.* The constant return of the weekly sabbath, and its worship, keeps alive those impressions of religion which the cares, and business, and distractions of this world would wear away. Our Saviour makes a special promise applicable to it, saying, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "The Lord is in his holy temple. He loveth

the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," peculiarly there manifesting to his people his presence, in which is "fullness of joy." He declares, "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer." Worldly men find it natural and easy to meet in a mart or exchange for worldly advantages, and the religious man finds it thus easy to go to the house of God for spiritual advantages. We thus turn the sympathy of nature, common to us all, to its best account. It has a tendency to unite men together in mutual love. We are quickened, solemnized, and enlivened by the devotion of a well-ordered congregation. "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart," says David, "in the congregation of the faithful." Earth affords not a more impressive, affecting, and solemn sight, than that of a whole congregation uniting in acts of prayer and praise to the great Lord of all. In such a scene, also, the Christian peculiarly enjoys the privilege of the communion of saints.

The reading and preaching of the Holy Scriptures being joined with public worship, the young, the poor, the ignorant, and uninstructed, have by this means, a most important opportunity of religious instruction. The beneficial effects of this, when generally kept up through a whole nation, cannot easily be estimated.

But public worship *is a privilege as well as a duty*—To the Christian it is not a burthensome task, but a delighful employment, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, to join his fellow Christians in prayer and praise. Observe how David speaks—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Hence the Sabbath is to the Christian a happy day. He looks forward to it with pleasure. He regrets its departure. He would not, on any account, willingly deprive himself of its privileges, or lose its worship.

The observance of the *Sabbath* is so intimately connected with public worship, that it may be useful to show the obligation to keep holy the Lord's day.

The sabbath was sanctified and set apart for God from the beginning.* "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Hence we may infer not only the advantage, but the absolute necessity, as the world now is, if we would pay any suitable regard to religion, or to the salvation of our immortal souls, of time set apart for the immediate service of God.

The command to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," though given to the Jewish church with many circumstances of peculiar strictness, occurs among the moral laws in the Ten Commandments. Mr. Cecil thus explains its true character—"The Jewish Sabbath was partly of political institution, and partly of moral obligation; so far as it was a political appointment, designed to preserve the Jews from other nations, it is abrogated; so far as it was of moral obligation, it remains in force. Christ came not to abolish the Sabbath, but to explain and enforce it, as he did the rest of the law. Its observance was no where positively enjoined by him, because Christianity was to be practicable, and was to go into all nations, and it goes thither stripped of its precise and various circumstances. 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,' seems to be the soul of the Christian Sabbath." The circumstance of the continuance of the Jewish Economy, while our Lord and his Apostles lived, sufficiently accounts for there being no positive precepts in the New

* It has, indeed, been objected, that there is no subsequent mention of the observance of the sabbath by the patriarchs; but not to say that there are intimations of a division of time into weeks, Gen. viii. 10, 12; xxix. 27; l. 10, it might, for the same reason, have been thought, that the Jews did not observe the sabbath from Moses to David, since in the history of all that time there is no mention made of that day. Those who object to the institution of the sabbath, from the beginning, admit that "if the divine command was actually delivered at the creation, it was addressed no doubt to the whole human species alike, and continues, unless repealed by some subsequent revelation, binding on all who come to the knowledge of it."

Testament respecting the observance of the first day of the week, our Sunday. Yet the practice of the primitive church, their freedom from the Jewish Sabbath, and the actual appointment in our country of the first day, plainly require our observing Sunday, "the Lord's day," being the first, instead of Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

While our Saviour "who is Lord even of the Sabbath day," has rectified the superstitious abuse of the Institution, and allows us to perform works of necessity and charity, yet it is clear that he would never have reformed the abuse of this fourth Commandment, had the Sabbath been an ordinance which was to die in a little time. Hence it is our plain duty, as far as it is possible, to devote the first day of the week wholly to the service of God. "We are going," says Mr. Cecil, "to spend a sabbath in eternity. The Christian will acquire as much of the sabbath spirit as he can. And in proportion to a man's real piety, in every age of the church, he will be found to have been a diligent observer of the Sabbath day."

Alas! how perpetually is this holy day profaned in our Christian land! what multitudes transact their usual business! how many shops in large towns are more or less open! how many thousands of Sunday newspapers are published, sold, and read! what needless travelling, visiting, writing letters, settling of accounts, &c.

But how much more holy and more happy is the Christian's employment of this day. It is to him a delight and a joy. He gives it wholly to its varied, but sacred duties. He reads the Scriptures, and other devotional books, examines his heart, thinks on his ways, and meditates on spiritual and eternal things. He attends public worship, and instructs his family, or visits the poor and afflicted. He seeks to have his heart with God all the day long, and thus passing his Sabbaths here below, he becomes better prepared for an eternal sabbath above.

But to return to the duty of public worship.

My readers may be of two classes:—either more or less neglecting public worship, or constantly attending it. Are you *living in neglect of public worship?* To such it may be said, though it be no certain mark of the truth of a man's religious profession that he comes to public worship, yet the habitual or frequent absence, when he has it in his power to come, is a plain mark that a man has no real religion. He is unlike his Saviour, and unlike the disciples of that Saviour: and thus continuing to despise the earthly house of his God, he will fail of an entrance into his eternal mansions. It was foretold, that in the days of the Messiah, his followers should generally and unitedly assemble together, to engage themselves in his service. "Many people shall say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." May you, then, be excited by the considerations which I have stated, to begin a constant, regular, and habitual attendance at the honse of God; and thus not only gain inestimable benefits to yourself, but also by your example and your influence bring others thither. But perhaps you may imagine that you have sufficient reasons to induce you to stay at home.

It is not an uncommon objection made to a due attendance on the duty of public worship, *I can pray better at home—I can learn more at home by reading good books.* The preceding observations have already furnished a sufficient answer to this objection. Those who make it, not unfrequently totally neglect also religious duties at home. Public worship is a means of grace of divine appointment, and therefore must not be neglected. Though you may not seem to derive that profit and edification which you think you gain from reading a religious book, you do in reality lose all the peculiar benefits of public worship yourself, and do all that the power of example can effect, to keep others from its advantages. Besides, did you really know more than your teachers, you might still learn, from the example of our Saviour, in whom were, and "are hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge," to attend public worship. We read of him "as his

custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day."

Others think that it is *unnecessary to go constantly.* The same reasons which require you to go at all, call on you also to be constant in going. It is the regular return of the duty which makes it so valuable in the Christian life. You do not think it unnecessary to partake constantly and regularly of food for your body; nor is it less necessary to be regular in seeking food for your soul. A leaky vessel in the ocean, continually letting in the waters, needs continual pumping and bailing to keep it free; and thus the corrupt heart of man calls for a constant use of every means to keep it free from sin. A constant attendance is of great advantage. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." It would appear from Heb. x, 25, 27, that remissness respecting "the assembling of ourselves together," was the first step to apostasy. Will not the constancy of the early Christians in frequenting their assemblies for worship in great difficulties, and often at the risk of their lives, condemn you who refuse to attend, though the house of God is open and you have full liberty to go thither?

Some refuse to go because they have a personal *prejudice against the minister.* There may be, indeed, trying cases of unfaithful teachers, and there is a sad woe pronounced on those "by whom the offence cometh;" but surely this objection ought not to induce you altogether to neglect attendance on public worship. We should not disregard that instruction even of an ungodly minister, which is scriptural. "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works, for they say and do not." But let me ask, have you practised fervent, persevering, and united prayer for your minister? Try this; and perhaps your prejudices may be removed, or his character changed. Christians often forget, in their desire of having a faithful minister, who shall preach to them the pure doctrines of Christ, that it is as easy for God to enlighten their present minister "with the true knowledge and understanding of his word," to enable their present pastor, "both by his preaching and living to set it forth, and show it accordingly," as it is to send them such an one as they desire. Let me strongly and urgently recommend you to try the plan of fervent and persevering prayer for your minister.

Many of my readers, however, *attend public worship constantly.* To them, on this point, I need only say, "be not weary in well doing." You have, however, perhaps, relatives, friends, dependants, or connections whom you greatly love, who never come at all. May what has been said incline you to use every proper means in your power to bring them. You have over them, probably, the influence of authority, friendship, or affection; use this talent of influence in your Saviour's service; and, by the constraining power of love, compel them to come in to his house. And while you thus exert yourself in their behalf, O seek, on every account, duly to perform that great duty in which you yourself are engaged. Seek, when you "come into his courts, to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

We proceed to consider, *how we may duly worship God in his house.* We may worship God "in the beauty of holiness." We do this, when, approaching him in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the assistance of his Spirit, all our faculties are fixed and engaged in this work; our expressions accompanied by suitable affections, by holy longings and thirstings of soul after God. In short, when the whole man is dedicated to the solemn act of worshipping God.

There is no beauty in holiness, without a reference to the mediation of Jesus Christ. God cannot, but through Him, look on sinners with acceptance. But Jesus Christ, like the High Priest of Israel, bears "the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts." He has *holiness to the Lord* "upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." Every prayer must be offered up in his name.

It may be useful to point out some things inconsistent with this due worship of God.

An unprepared mind, thoughtless of the work till about to be engaged in it, will very generally lead to careless worship.

Coming from *wrong motives* will lead to the same thing. Some come merely from form or custom, or to be seen of men; without any expectation of finding the presence of God, or any desire to obtain his grace. Others come merely as a self-righteous act, fancying public worship to be a species of meritorious obedience, that will entitle them to heaven.

Carelessness and irreverence mark the worship of some. They come in late, in the middle of prayers, when they have it in their power to come in good time. Not to mention the bad effect of this as an example, only consider for a moment the disturbance which it occasions in the devotions of others. It has been justly observed, "a well-tutored mind will revolt at the thought of unnecessarily disturbing others in the most solemn of all employments. If you look at the various classes of Christians, you will find, with scarcely an exception, that those who have been the greatest honour to religion, and added most to the edification of their brethren, attended on God's worship steadily and in proper time. There is often a striking analogy between people's manner in such things, and their general character."*

Others are careless during worship. They sit at the proper time for kneeling or standing, though no bodily infirmities may require it.† They look about them, and are attracted by any thing that may pass in the congregation. But if servants were to come before any master on earth to ask for a favour in the same careless, disrespectful way, what could they expect, but a denial of their request, and a rebuke for their contempt of his person and presence? Our minds and faculties ought to be absorbed in the great act of worshipping Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh; but, alas! all have more or less reason to bewail sad wanderings and distractions of spirit.

These things are inconsistent with worshipping God as we ought. Our Lord says, "that his true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

As some of the directions which follow will have a particular reference to those who join in the forms of our church, it may be expedient to point out some of *the advantages of a Liturgy.** Great allowance must indeed be made for the power of custom and education, which have such an influence upon our minds, as much to affect our devotional feelings. One who has been accustomed to join a congregation in worshipping without forms, has perhaps a great prejudice against them, and may find it difficult with a form to worship God in spirit and in truth. But another having found the presence of God in the simple and scriptural devotion of our Liturgy, will find extempore prayer, in public worship, an impediment to his devotions.

While it is admitted there is danger of mere formality, weariness, and inattentiveness, both to the minister and people, in the use of forms of prayer; yet, it appears to the writer, that this danger is not

* See Kinghorn on Public Worship. Mr. Scott remarks, "It is certainly very dishonourable to God whom we worship, and very irreverent, and a very bad example to others, for persons to be frequently, or without sufficient reason, too late at a place of worship; to the interruption of others, and often (I speak feelingly) of him who leads the worship.—There is nothing that with me tends so much to make our public worship formal, as the continual interruption which arises from persons coming in after the service is begun." See the volume of his letters.

† The propriety of kneeling in public worship is manifested by various Scripture examples. 2 Chron. vi, 12, 13; Ezra ix, 5; Dan. vi, 10; Paul, Acts xxi, 5; Eph. iii, 14. Observe the invitation of the Psalmist, (Ps. xcv, 6,) "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker"—and the example of our Lord, who "kneeled down and prayed" (Luke xxii, 41,) and also of St. Paul, (see Acts xx, 36,) where it is said that he "kneeled down and prayed with them all."

* We are here speaking of forms of prayer, not for private or family, but for public worship. The word Liturgy is derived from a Greek word, signifying *public work*—he who labours not in his prayers, does not pray aright.

confined to them; it is, alas! the grand difficulty of all desiring true prayer, however they may worship. It also appears to him, that our Liturgy has advantages which we cannot otherwise so completely and effectually receive: independent of the fact, that pious clergymen continually find the advantage of having an exposition of divine truth of acknowledged excellence to refer to as a standard.

Our Lord says, "If any two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them." Now, though there is in the mind of man, that quickness of apprehension and consent, which may obtain the benefit of this promise in extempore prayer, yet the agreement of the desire spoken of, may be more especially and fully attained in the use of a form, which all the Christians who meet together have long known and approved. Is there not also a danger in extempore prayer, lest the mind of the hearer being held in continual expectation, should be detained from its proper business by the very novelty with which it is gratified?

Where the worship of those who join in our Liturgy is sincere, may we not say, that this is more manifestly "pray-in the Holy Ghost?" because, while the heart is engaged, and the desires expressed are scriptural, the mere natural affections cannot have been raised by novelty of expression or sentiment. So far, therefore, from their being less, there is, to a spiritual worshipper, greater evidence in the use of forms of obtaining and enjoying communion with God.

It is sometimes objected, that forms stint and limit the Spirit; but let it never be forgotten, that the great thing wanted in prayer is not the multitude and variety of expressions, but an engaged heart and warm affections. "They who use forms pray by the Spirit when their petitions are accompanied with fervent affections stirred in them by the Holy Ghost. They who are most fluent in conceived prayer, may pray only from the strength of their natural parts and endowments."

Some are offended at the repetitions of our Liturgy; and it is readily admitted, that neither this nor any other human composition is perfect. But Bishop Hopkins, speaking to those offended at the frequent recurrence of the same requests, says, "It is much in their own power," that is, by due watchfulness, dependence on Christ, and the like, "to make them to be either vain repetitions, or the most fervent ingeminations of their most affectionate desires unto God, and the most spiritual and forcible part of all their prayers and supplications." It may be observed, that there is nothing in Scripture against the lawfulness of using forms; and the form of prayer given by our Lord, with the direction, "When ye pray, say, Our Father," &c. (Luke xi, 2,) appears satisfactory, as was before observed, both as to the allowableness and expediency of forms. It may also be again remarked, how much of the whole Bible is a continued series of prayers, so that no one can pray judiciously, and at length, without bringing in many scriptural forms of prayer.

The candid testimony of those who dissent from us is very satisfactory respecting the excellence of our Liturgy. Doddridge, writing to a member of a dissenting congregation, says, "I doubt not, but many pious souls in the Established Church, have daily converse with God in the offices of it, and I heartily rejoice in the thought." The eloquent and excellent Robert Hall of Leicester, speaks still more decidedly, and says of the Liturgy, "Though a Protestant Dissenter, I am by no means insensible to its merits: I believe that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastened fervour of its devotion, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions."

It is promised to the Church, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers:" and who that has a just and enlarged view of the various talents and characters of those who minister in holy things, and of the difficulty of always choosing fit instruments, but must rejoice, that, in our National Establishment, whoever ministers, there is a devout and scriptural Liturgy, in which the congregation may join and worship God in spirit and in truth.

Places set apart for public worship, are

not only necessary for us to assemble ourselves together, but the habit of meeting there only for religious purposes, has also a tendency to withdraw our minds from the world. There is a relative holiness about them as they are set apart for holy ends, like the hill of Sion. One of the greatest instances of our Lord's displeasure was for the profanation of the temple. Mark xi, 17. There may, however, be an erroneous idea of sanctity attached to the place where we worship. If we consider a church as the proper dwelling-place of God, where he is nearer to us to hear our prayers, or ascribe to it an imaginary sanctity, rendering our devotions more holy, we mistake the use of God's house. "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands:" and our Lord teaches us to worship, not in any particular place, but "in spirit and in truth."

To assist in this, the following directions are added.

1. *A due approach to the house of God.*

Prepare for public worship. The preparation of the heart is requisite before prayer. "Prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him. Amos, (ch. iv, 12,) tells us "Prepare to meet thy God." While this applies more particularly to God's coming to Israel in wrath and judgment, let it also direct us to a suitable preparation of mind in all our intercourse with him, "whose name is Holy." We are to "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." Respecting the duties of the Sabbath in particular, it is profitable to think of them, and prepare for them the evening before. Sir Matthew Hale says to his children, "I would not have you meddle with any recreations, pastimes, or ordinary work of your calling, from Saturday night at eight o'clock, till Monday morning. For though I am not apt to think that Saturday night is part of the Christian Sabbath, yet it is fit thus to prepare the heart for it." We should not rush hastily into the Divine presence. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." That great and glorious Lord and Saviour, who "holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," is especially present. The Apostle seems to intimate, that the angels who are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation," attend in Christian assemblies. 1 Cor. xi, 10. We should feel with David, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever," and shall thus be led to see that a due preparation of heart is suitable and needful. If you can, then, obtain time and opportunity for this purpose, I would exhort you to prepare your hearts by secret prayer and reading the Scriptures. It has been found by some to be a good practice to read the Lessons of the day before the service. One eminently good man was accustomed to spend most of the Sabbath morning in secret prayer and meditation, and was wont to say, "We many times blame the minister, when the fault is our own, that we have not prayed for him as we should."

Be watchful over your spirit in going. Much of our spirituality and comfort in public worship depends on the state of mind in which we come. We should, as far as may be, abstain not only from worldly business, but worldly conversation and thoughts on the Sabbath. "A dream cometh," says Solomon, "through the multitude of business." If you are conversing or thinking on the things of this world till you enter the house of God, how is it possible that your heart can at once be raised to God?

Earnestly aim at going thither in the *spirit of prayer*, looking upwards for the divine blessing to give life, efficacy, and unction to the outward service. It would be happy for us if we could always go in that spirit which David describes: "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." When we come in any thing of this spirit, how different a service is public worship from what it is when we come carelessly. How humbling, how awful, how elevating!

Let us also go in the *spirit of praise.*

"I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." We should come up to his house with a thankful, grateful spirit; with the feeling of children going to their parents; not in the spirit of bondage, but in the spirit of adoption. A dutiful child, entirely dependent on the bounty, wisdom, and love of its kind father, after experiencing the contempt or unfriendly treatment to which a stranger in a foreign country is exposed, loves to go to the father's dwelling. While we are in this hostile and ensnaring world, it is our privilege to do so; "to serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with singing. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise."

Yet let holy joy be ever connected with *godly fear*. The Jews were commanded, "Reverence my sanctuary." And Solomon's directions should often be in our thoughts: "Keep thy foot," (watch and mark all the motions of soul and body, restraining all that would be unbecoming,) "when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." We should endeavour to have that lively impression of the divine presence, which pervaded Jacob's mind, after his intercourse with his God; "Surely the Lord is in this place—how dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The more just and lively views we have of God's character, presence, and glory, the more we shall seek to honour him. This reverence St. Paul urges; "Let us have grace," (we cannot do without it,) "whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and goldly fear."

Closely connected with this reverence will be *deep self-abasement*. We may always observe this, when God's servants have had near approaches to him, or a true view of his glory, they have been greatly humbled in the sense of their own sinfulness; as Abraham, "Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes;" or as Job, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth;" or as Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." We should come with that feeling which Daniel well expresses, "We do not present our supplications before thee, O Lord, for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies."

II. *A due behaviour in the House of God.*

Those who come with the views and feelings which I have mentioned, will readily admit the propriety and follow the practice of the custom among us, first to seek in private the grace of God to help us in our worship. Let this be done briefly and fervently; constantly, but not formally.*

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*I cannot here but quote an admirable prayer of Bonnel's: his Biographer says, "When he came early to church, and could get to a retired place, he continued at his private devotions until the public service began, or a very little before; and how he employed those happy moments of privacy and devotion in the house of God, the following prayer, mentioned as used by him in the church before morning prayer began, will show:

"Behold, O Lord, this portion of thy family, whom in this place thou hast so often graciously visited and favoured; and who, having addicted and given up ourselves to thy service, are here met together in behalf of ourselves and of the rest of our happy number, and of all our Christian brethren, even the whole Church. We beseech thee to unite our hearts more and more in thyself, that we may have but one heart, and one mind, as we have but one design, one aim, and hope. Let us now welcome each other with hearts full of love and joy, into thy presence, as we hope one day to welcome each other in thy presence in glory. Let our civil respects before thy service begins, be such hearty and holy salutations as the blessed Elizabeth gave to the mother of our Lord, and may we have leave to say to each other, 'Hail, thou that art favoured of God; the Lord is with thee!' Behold, we come with united hearts, to beg of thee the confirming of thy grace and favour to us; we come to present ourselves before thee, with most thankful acknowledgments for thy mercies received, and to adore thee who hast so graciously visited us. We come humbly to implore of thee strength against our respective temptations and difficulties in life; to beseech thee to supply all our weaknesses; to make us happily victorious against all our corruptions; and more than conquerors through thee who hast loved us. But,

The great thing is to keep our minds and affections fixed on the duty before us, so as to be able to say, "this one thing I do." Aim, then to have the mind engaged, and affections excited suitable to every part of the service. Protestants see at once the folly of praying in an unknown tongue; but, unless the heart join in the prayer—unless, when the minister "bless with the Spirit, he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say, Amen," (i. e.) really join with his heart "at thy giving of thanks," it is as unprofitable as if he prayed in a foreign language. Prayers are not to be heard as sermons, but to be really offered up to God in the desire of the heart. In the word read and preached by the minister, let us hear God speaking, and receive it in faith. In joining the confessions of sin, let memory bring before you your particular transgressions; and let your hearts confess as well as your lips. In petitions for pardon and a supply of necessities, let faith realize the power and willingness of God to give. In praying for others, remember, God's children are members of that one body to which you are united; and those now in darkness may yet be fellow members of the same body. Truly desire their best good. In thanksgiving, call to mind your own particular mercies, and your utter unworthiness of them. Our hearts should overflow with gratitude, while our mouth is filled with praise, We should have David's feelings—"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."

But in all, have an especial reference to the mediation, intercession, and grace of Christ. Vain are all the foregoing rules and hints without the Spirit of Christ in your heart. You cannot really or profitably practise one of them, unless the Holy Spirit be in you; for however necessary rules and precepts may be, never yet was a Christian formed by rules alone, but by the Spirit of Christ giving life to the letter, and writing the rule in the heart. He is present. By faith, then, realize his presence. It spreads a savour—it imparts a life and beauty—it throws a glory upon Christian assemblies. Believe, then, the Lord Jesus Christ to be standing in the midst of his people, giving power to the prayers, and efficacy to the blessing at the close, and offering up in heaven all those petitions which you have made on earth.

While the prayers which the minister has to read alone are repeating, do not accompany him by your voice, or in whispers: this well meaning people sometimes do; but it disturbs the devotions of others. The thing to be aimed at is, that your heart go along with all the service, desiring every blessing, and holding unseen communion with God.

And, Christian reader, may I not appeal to you, that when you have come to the house of God in the spirit of prayer, and with an earnest longing, to enjoy the presence of God, and the communion of saints with your fellow Christians, you have found in some of the pathetic expressions of our Liturgy, that nearness to God, and that intercourse with him, which has been to your own mind a manifest fulfillment of the promise to be present with us when we meet in his name. For instance, in repeating those earnest entreaties for mercy at the end of the Litany, "O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! O Christ, hear us!" have you not in happy moments, found your heart deeply affected, elevated, and drawn out to the Saviour?

The spiritual worship of God in every part of the service, without wandering or distracted thoughts, is one of the highest attainments of the Christian, and perhaps not to be expected on this side of the grave; but, alas, how far from this are we in general! The writer mourns his own continual failure of spiritual worship, while he is endeavouring to exhort others to seek its attainment. It has been observed, "How empty

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O our bountiful Lord God! if it be such joy to meet those whom we love now in thy presence, what will it be to meet ten thousand glorified spirits, each of which we shall love infiinitely more in thy kingdom of glory than we can do any creature here! Glory be to thee, O Lord of glory and of love, who hast given us such present pleasure in thy service, and such comfortable hopes of those eternal good things which thou hast prepared for them that love thee. Amen."

would our congregations be sometimes, if no more bodies were present than there are souls? and what abundance of sorry service hath our God that nobody sees." This subject will be more fully considered hereafter. See chapter xi.

The *hearing of the truth* in faith, humility, and love, is a most important part in the solemnities of public worship. On this, however, we cannot here enlarge. Let it only be observed, that the more we can hear with a devout heart, with a soul continually darting up holy desires that God would send home to our hearts what we hear, the more we thus hear with self-application and earnest prayer, the more profit we shall receive.

After the close of service, you should be glad of the pause allowed in all well-ordered congregations, for secret prayer to God, that he may pardon every imperfection, and impress all that you have heard on your heart.

III. *A due return from worship.*

Alas! how alive is the great adversary to rob us of every good which we may obtain. The benefit and comfort of meeting our fellow Christians in a solemn act of worship, is often lost by the vain or trifling conversation with them, which so frequently succeeds immediately on leaving the church. Is it not the fulfilling of that saying, "When they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts?"

Christians should aim at carrying on the benefits of public worship by suitable, spiritual, and heavenly conversation, while obliged to be in company. And they should, when practicable, retire as soon as may be from the church to the closet, to examine what has been the state of their minds, and to meditate and pray over what they have heard and done. It would greatly assist in impressing the sermon deeply on your heart, to turn as soon as may be after hearing it, the substance of it into a prayer; confessing the sins that have been brought home to your conscience, and asking for grace to fulfill the duties that have been enforced. O that all ministers had such hearers!

Lactantius says, "That is not true religion which is left at the church. The holy and heavenly principles enforced, or exercised there, should be carefully nourished to influence the life." The Church of Christ would soon assume a far brighter character, did we duly improve this great means of grace.

But as there is danger of a careless return, so there is danger of *self-righteousness.* Mixed and defiled as all our services are, yet through the blindness of our minds, we are apt to think we are something when we are nothing. Though it is the highest act of divine mercy that God is willing to hear us, we are ready to fancy that we are doing something for him, and put him under an obligation by praying. I appeal to those who have watched their hearts for the truth of this. O beware of this self-righteous spirit which would taint all you do. "When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, (and who has done this? but supposing the case) say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."

Yet let not any (for we are apt to err on every side) be too much *discouraged by the strictness recommended.* The writer freely confesses how much he falls short of what he recommends; "the good I would, I do not; the evil I would not, that I do." Let the conviction of our falling short only lead us to see the necessity of a total surrender to the righteousness of our crucified, risen, and interceding Saviour; and to come more simply to him for strength to do that which is of manifest excellence, and a plain duty.

CHAPTER VII.

*Family Worship.**

THERE are some very important means of grace, and outward observances, which are plainly implied in the word of God,

* The greatest part of this chapter may perhaps be read with advantage by the master of a family, when first beginning to attend to this duty.

for the performance of which we have few, if any, positive, plain, and express precepts. We are left to gather them from the examples of holy men, and from various incidental circumstances: such, in some degree, is the duty of public, and such more plainly is the duty of family worship.

The reasons may be these. The Christian dispensation is designed as a religion for people in every country, and in every situation in which a human being can be placed. It is more of a spiritual transaction between God and the soul than the Mosaic dispensation was. Had there then been positive precepts respecting the means of grace, and the circumstantials of religion, and particularly respecting time, place, or frequency, the tender conscience, of which God has ever manifested particular regard, would necessarily have been burdened when placed in situations where the duty was impracticable.†

By this, also, another important end is answered. A trial is made of men's spirits. It is seen, whether, because a positive precept cannot be brought requiring its performance, men will neglect a duty plainly implied. Thus more of the real state of our minds is discovered, and it is manifested whether we have, or have not, a full and ardent love for God, his worship, and service.

It will not, however, be difficult to prove the *obligation* to family worship in various ways.

Consider *the example of Abraham*, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. His family piety is that for which he is blessed by Jehovah himself: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Abraham is here commended for instructing his children and his household in the most important of all duties, "the way of the Lord," the great doctrines of religion, and "justice and judgment," its great duties. And observe, "he will command" them; that is, he will use that just authority which God gives the father and head of a family in the religious instruction of his children. Abraham also prayed with, as well as instructed his family. Wherever he fixed his tent, there he built an altar to the Lord. This we read he did in the plain of Moriah. And when he removed to a mountain on the east of Bethel, "there he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord." Now we may say to those who neglect family worship, that as all real Christians are Abraham's seed, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Your neglect of this duty tends to show that you do not really belong to Christ.*

The *examples of other holy men* are similar to that of Abraham. Consider the holy determination of Joshua, who declared to all Israel, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Neither the exalted station which he occupied, nor his various and pressing public labours, prevented his attention to the religion of his family. When David had brought the ark of God into Jerusalem with gladness, sacrifices and thanksgivings, after discharging all his public duties, and blessing the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts, "he returned to bless his household." In addition to these might be brought the examples of Job, (ch. i, 5,) Daniel, (ch. vi, 10,) and others. While the ark rested in the house of Obededom, a blessing came on him and all his household. Would you then obtain the blessing of your household, let your family be daily assembled for prayer and praise. Observe the praise given to Cornelius; he was "a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house; which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God

† See Cecil's Remains.

* Let us also notice the principle which influenced Abraham—"If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory." But he utterly renounced such ideas. In pleading before God, how he abases himself: "Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes!" Abraham was justified by faith, and relying on the promises of God, his heart was filled with love, and hence he sought to impart to his family those spiritual blessings which he himself enjoyed.

alway." The early Christians practised this duty. St. Paul greets the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquilla, when they were at Rome, and sends the salutation of the church that was in their house when they were in Asia. We may probably gather hence, that he alludes rather to the assembly of a religious family than to that of a stated congregation. When Peter was released by the angel from prison, "he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, where many were gathered together praying."

These examples are brought forward to show you, that in duly attending to family worship, you are "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

The *example of Jesus Christ* confirms the obligation arising from that of good men. He was the head of his family, and his Apostles belong to his household. We perpetually read how he instructed them in private, and asked them various questions as to their religious knowledge. He often prayed with his disciples. You call yourself a Christian; then remember, "he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked."

Threatenings are pronounced *against those who disregard this duty.* Those who neglect the worship of God in their families, lie, (awful thought!) under the displeasure of the Almighty, under the frown of the Most High. Observe what is said, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Now, if the heathen and their families are to be thus punished, judge you what will become of those families in a Christian land, living as heathens, without regard to God and his worship. Indeed, "if any provide not for his own, and especially for his own house, (both in temporal and spiritual things) he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Ah, Christian, if you have hitherto neglected this duty, you should, without delay, "fly for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel;" seek for pardon through the blood of Christ: and henceforth "walk in newness of life." Yes, begin "to-day, while it is called to-day," to practise the duty.

Family prayer has also some peculiar advantages. It is *a most important means of propagating piety to posterity.* Children are creatures of imitation. They love to copy all that they see in others. The characters of unborn generations may depend on your conduct in this matter. David says of the Lord, "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Perhaps the present degraded condition of the millions of immortal souls now living in idolatry, with all their guilt and misery, might be traced up to the neglect of family instruction, as one principal cause.

Family worship, when duly conducted, is *attended with many happy effects on your whole family.* No wonder that those who neglect this, are continually troubled with the misconduct and perverseness of those under and about them; no wonder that jarrings, dissensions, and other disagreeable circumstances are continually disquieting them. It is just what might be expected. How can they, who neglect the worship of God in their families, look for peace or comfort in them? I am sure, also, that I may confidently appeal to those who have regular and daily family prayer, that, when conducted in a simple and devout spirit, it has a tendency to remove, or allay, all those unhappy passions to which our common nature is subject, and which, more or less, appear in every family. It unites the members of the family together, gives the head of it a feeling of tenderness and affection for those under him, and makes them esteem and love him. Some masters are, on this account, almost considered as angels in their families. Cecil says of family worship rightly conducted, "It may be used as an engine of vast

power in a family. It diffuses a sympathy through the members. It calls the mind off from the deadening effects of worldly affairs. It arrests every member with a morning and evening sermon, in the midst of all the hurries and cares of life. It says, 'There is a God!' 'There is a spiritual world!' 'There is a life to come!' It fixes the idea of responsibility in the mind. It furnishes a tender and judicious father or master, with an opportunity of gently glancing at faults, where a direct admonition might be inexpedient. It enables him to relieve the weight with which subordination or service often sits on the minds of inferiors."

Family prayer gains for us *the presence and blessing of our Lord.* There is a promise of his presence, which appears peculiarly applicable to this duty. Matt. xviii, 19, 20. Many have found in family worship, that help and communion with God which they had sought for with less effect in private prayer. It was the experience of one Christian, "I find more of the presence of God, and more of the real spirit of prayer, in praying with my family, than in almost any other means of grace." Surely, the Christian, who really loves his Saviour, would regularly call his family together to pray with him, from this consideration alone, that he might enjoy more of his Lord's presence.

Dr. Buchanan strikingly contrasts *a family which worships God, and a family which worships him not:* and the excellence of the remarks will justify the length of the quotation. "How painful it is to reflect," he says, "that there should be in this kingdom, many domestic societies, among whom the worship of the Deity is not known, in whose houses no grateful accents are ever heard, no exultation of heart for the divine goodness. There are indeed, accents of exultation and mirth; 'and the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, are in their feasts;' but there is no remembrance of God: 'they regard not the operation of his hands.' While even inanimate nature, in a certain sense, offereth praise to the great Creator, and fulfilleth his will; *these* men pass through life in silence! Insensible to the mercies, or judgments, or power, or providence of the unseen God; yes, more insensible than the inhabitants of heathen lands, upon whom the light of truth has never shined.

"How different is the scene which is presented in those happy families, where the voice of prayer and thanksgiving consecrates every day! where the word of God is devoutly read, and the infants are taught to lisp their Creator's praise. There, from day to day, domestic peace and love, and harmony, are cherished by the sublimest motives, and strengthened by the tenderest and most powerful sanctions. On the hallowed day they repair, with gladness of heart, to their respective places of worship, and mingle with assemblies which meet with much more delight for praise and prayer than other assemblies for worldly mirth. And let not the world contemn, or disturb their holy exercise: for we learn from Scripture, that it is from such families and assemblies, who are 'the salt of the earth,' worshipping in the midst of us, that the incense of prayer ascends *in behalf of the country*, and is accepted in heavenly places through the intercession of the Mediator."

Though these reasons would of themselves be sufficient to establish this duty, and therefore be a sufficient answer to any objections, it may be proper to consider some of the objections usually made.

One objection sometimes offered is, *I have no ability to pray in my family.* I have no talents or gifts for this work, and should only expose myself. It has been remarked, "This is almost the only case in which people are apt to have a very mean opinion of their own abilities. But this is not the language of Christian humility." Let me reply to the objection in the words of Milner—"It is acknowledged that many are unfit for such an undertaking, and there are those who are forward to attempt things, for which (at least till they have more experience) they are not qualified. But we have good and sound forms of prayer, easily procured, which you may make use of on these occasions. Surely, if you attend to this practise, in a hearty, conscientious way,

avoiding all unmeaning, cold formality, which is the too common bane of things of this nature, you may expect the divine blessing to accompany it to yourselves and your households."

Another objection is, *I am afraid of being ridiculed*, or thought unnecessarily precise and strict. This, though not much brought forward, has frequently great weight with those who neglect this duty. Now, here, I say, the irreligion of others is the very reason why you should be faithful to God. Imitate here the holy example of Noah, Abraham, Joshua, and all the servants of God. If your religion were real, though you stood alone in the world, it might still be said of you, in the striking expressions of Milton—

> ——— "faithful found
> Among the faithless, faithful only he
> Among innumerable false, unmoved,
> Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
> His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal:
> Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
> To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
> Though single." *Paradise Lost, Book V.*

Perhaps in this very thing, God is bringing the touchstone to your character: he here tries you whether you will indeed confess Christ before men. Remember, then, "if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we confess him before men, he will also confess us before his Father and the holy angels in heaven." Some have regular family worship in general, but when they have any friend in the house, unaccustomed to this service, they are induced by the fear of man, or perhaps the pretence of not giving offence, to neglect it. This conduct is utterly unworthy of a true Christian.

Others object, *I have not time for the duty;* I am engaged in business from morning to night. Is this true? then surely you, who have so much to do, above all men ought especially to seek the favour and help of God. His blessing "maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it:" but without it, all your endeavours and labours will profit you nothing; they will never make you happy. But have you never any leisure for amusement, for vanity, trifling, and folly? Remembering that God knows how you employ all your time, will you venture to say, that you cannot collect your family together for a few minutes in the morning and in the evening? Have you time to provide food for their perishing bodies, which last but a few days, but no time to dispense the bread of life to their never-dying souls? The want of time proceeds in most cases from indisposition to the duty; or, at best, from want of due management. If you appoint those stated and fixed times which shall be found most convenient, and keep to them regularly, you will find that it will be as easy to collect your family together, and as indispensable to have regular family prayer, as it is to have your daily meals.

Some bring an objection of another kind—*I should meet with opposition from some in the family.* Are you only an inferior member of the family? you should still, at proper times, use what influence you have to obtain so great a blessing;* and if you cannot succeed in your attempts, God will not lay the sin of neglecting family worship to your charge. But whatever weight this objection may have with those in inferior stations in the family, sure I am that this objection should have no weight with the master, or the head of the family. Do not have thus plainly to confess that you fear man rather than God. Remember, that you are responsible for the duties of that station in which you are placed. Be firm, and of good courage in this matter; and, whatever you may give up of your own ease and inclination in worldly things, for the sake of quietness and rest, give *nothing* up, where it concerns your duty, the good of immortal souls, and the glory of God, to be firm and resolute. See Ps. ci.

But you say, *I do pray with my family on a Sunday.* It is certainly better thus to collect your family together on the Sabbath, than not at all; but you are required to instruct your family, not

*I know an instance of a child in a family, where this duty was neglected, upon her return from a visit in another, where it was daily performed, being the instrument of effecting a reform in this particular, by only asking her parents, "Why can we not have daily family prayer?" The remonstrance of the child, through God's blessing, was effectual.

merely on Sunday, but "when you lie down, and when you rise up." Your limited performance of the duty shows that you do not really love and enjoy it; if you did, you would be more frequent in practising it. And I may appeal to you whether yourself and your family do not generally find it a weariness, (Mal. i, 13,) after the duties of the Sabbath, to be engaged in a service which daily custom and habit have not yet made necessary and delightful.

But is not the real, though not the avowed objection, this, *I am afraid of too great a restraint on myself?* I am afraid that more will be expected from me; that I must be more consistent in my character, and more circumspect in my conduct. Look well into your hearts if this be not the real difficulty; and if it be, only consider what a sad mark it is of a man's spiritual condition, when he is afraid of a restraint on his sins. Job xxi, 14, 15.

Howe observes, "We should look on family religion, not merely under the notion of a duty, and as imposed; but as a *privilege*, and a singular vouchsafement of grace that there may be such a thing."

"It hath been accounted so even in the very Pagan world. A divine presence, to have a *Numen* at hand and ready: how great a privilege hath it been reckoned! In the dark and dismal days of Popery, when that hath been *regnant*, what a terrible thing it has been counted to excommunicate a nation, to put it under an interdict. Now let us consider this matter so. What if instead of being bidden to pray in our families, we should be forbidden to pray in them. Make but that fearful supposition. Suppose there should be a special interdict on your house, and that by some particular signification of the mind of God from heaven it should be said, 'I will have no worship of God out of this house! from your house I will accept no sacrifice! I will hear no prayer!' What a terrible doom were this! What a dark and horrid cloud would be drawn over that habitation if it should be said, 'Here shall be no prayers, here shall be no mention of the name of God!' So that as in a like case represented to us in reference to the people of the Jews—the poor forlorn members of that family should say, 'We may not make mention of the name of the Lord,' what a dismal thing were this."*

Trusting, then, that the reader is now satisfied as to the duty and privilege of daily family prayer, and only wishes to know how he may best practise it; we will make some remarks with reference to the *due performance of family worship*.

Every head of a family should consider himself as the minister or priest of his own family. It is, if we may use the expression, his parish, and he should consider that he is as responsible to God for the souls thus committed to him, as the minister is on a larger scale. The sin of omission lies at his door if it be neglected. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven," may be applied to their spiritual as well as their temporal wants. Let the head of the family, then, consider it his duty and his privilege to conduct family worship.

A preparation of mind for this duty, by taking a few moments of retirement for self-recollection and prayer, has been found by many to be highly advantageous.

Where circumstances admit of it, read the Scriptures, and sing a Psalm or Hymn, as well as pray with your family.

Read the Scriptures: a portion from one Testament in the morning, and from the other in the evening. Both the Old and the New Testament are thus constantly brought before your families. If you pursue a regular course, going through one book before you begin another, your lesson will always be found for you. Those who have the talent of explaining the Scriptures in an impressive and lively way to their families, (and this talent will increase as it is used) will

* Howe's Works, vol. v. p. 413. The whole Tract, entitled "The Obligations to Family Religion and Worship," is well worthy of a serious and attentive perusal.

be able to give much additional interest by a few short observations on what has been read. Those who have not this talent, may find excellent helps for this purpose; as the Practical Observations in Scott's Bible, in Doddridge's Exposition of the New Testament, or selections from Matthew Henry. Only in all take care to be brief, practical, familiar, and serious. Any thing long, or critical, is out of place and tedious. Let each member of the family bring a Bible. Some have found that it helps to keep alive their attention, to refer them occasionally to parallel passages, one of the family reading the passage.* The reading of the Scriptures daily in family worship, is a plain and positive duty. How can you otherwise fulfil the express directions of the Scriptures themselves? Deut. vi, 7.

Occasionally *sing a Psalm or Hymn.* When you have time, and your family can join together in singing, this adds much to the cheerfulness of family devotion. "Psalmody," says Dr. Hammond, "made up a very great part of the devotions of the primitive Christians, both in the public assembly, and more privately in the family, and in their retirements in the closet." When our Lord had instructed his family, the twelve Apostles, he sung an hymn with them, (Matt. xxvi, 30,) and then prayed with them. John xvii. This great example may encourage us to "go and do likewise. St. Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual songs: singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Anticipate thus, on earth, the songs of the blessed above. Learn here below the employments of heaven, and fulfil the promise, "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their head."

Conclude with Prayer. To some, God has evidently given the spirit of grace and supplication, so that they can, after some practise and experience, pour out with ease and fluency the continued and refreshing stream of holy feelings and ardent devotion. This gift is bestowed on them for the benefit of others, and they ought freely to use it. It is also a gift which may be more generally attained than is commonly supposed. Many pious poor, without human learning, possess it in a great degree. Let others use good forms. Happy are the families that have devout and heavenly minded masters or parents, who pray for them in private, and edify them by praying with them.

The Lord's prayer seems particularly appropriate as a family prayer; and while comprehending the case and circumstances of the Universal Church, it still has a reference to that church under the idea of a family, "a whole family," one in heart and mind, however separated or dispersed in person.

After those directions which have been given respecting private, the less need be said on family prayer.

Respecting the *proper subjects* to be mentioned, there are some things which may, with great propriety and interest, be brought before the family altar.

Any particular circumstances which have occurred should be mentioned. Is any member of the family unwell? the prayer of faith may save the sick. Is any afflicted? "Call upon God in the time of trouble, and he will deliver him." Has any member left your family for a season? by praying for him, "though absent in body," you will be "present in spirit serving the Lord." Are any changes about to take place, or any scheme to be effected, in which the family are interested—any one about to join or to leave the household—are any special means of grace, confirmation, baptism, or the Lord's Supper before you? these things may properly be mentioned, and their due im-

* Some have found it an excellent practise, and it is one which is recommended to pious masters and mistresses, to take some time in the course of the Sabbath, or any other fixed time that may be more convenient, to converse apart with each member of the family on the subject of religion, giving them suitable advice. This has been attended with the happiest effects. It discovers the true state of your family—enables you better to pray for them, and with them—and gives you many happy opportunities of arousing the careless, strengthening the weak, encouraging the desponding, and confirming the strong.

provement be requested of God in family prayer.

Much of the substance of the Scriptures which you have read, may generally be advantageously turned into prayer. This, while it gains the blessing and averts the evil about which you pray, will also impress the passages of Scripture more deeply in the mind and on the heart, and will prevent sameness and repetition of expression.

These local circumstances induce the writer to think that extempore prayer is often more suitable and affecting for a family, than a form of prayer.* Nor is the objection that those who pray with you do not know what is coming, and therefore cannot join you, a really solid one. Experience confirms the remark of Bishop Wilkins, "that as a man may in his judgment assent unto any divine truth delivered in a sermon which he never heard before, so may he join in his affections unto any holy desire which he never before heard."

But to sum up the heads of family prayer in a few words, attend to these four things.

Family sins. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." This habitual, periodical, and mutual confession, morning and evening, of your mutual infirmities, your pride, your selfishness, your impatience, and your sinfulness, will have a great tendency also to soften down what is harsh and forbidding, and to unite you together.

Family wants, whether spiritual or temporal. Here is a large scope for daily prayer. And here you may pray that all may fulfil their relative duties, whether it be as father and mother, husband and wife, master and mistress, inmate, servant and child; and that all may apply themselves faithfully, constantly, and diligently, in their respective situations, to the work which God had given them to do; that they may exhibit the truth of David's saying, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Family friends. The parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends, of those assembled together, and the minister by whom they are instructed, should not be forgotten. Your immediate neighborhood, the town in which you dwell, the nation to which you belong, all in authority, and especially the cause and Church of Christ throughout the world, the Jews and the benighted Gentiles, should all have place in your prayers.

Family mercies. In the morning, after having been kept in safety throughout the defenceless hours of night, free from fire, accidents, or disturbance; in the evening when the wants of the family for the day have all been supplied, it is surely right, and almost natural for you to unite in acknowledging God's mercies. That you have "bread enough and to spare:" that you have light, life, liberty, health and strength, call for your united praise. But above all, "the common salvation," offered to you all; "the common faith," which you all profess to receive; the union in Jesus Christ—"One body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all:" all these things bestowed on Christians, through the inestimable love of God in Christ Jesus, require you to offer united sacrifices of thanksgiving.

Grace before and after meals is another part of family prayer, which no Christian master can neglect. The Apostle, after reproving those who commanded to abstain from meats, goes on to assert, "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving, of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." In discharging this part of family worship, take heed of a few mere formal words. Be serious and devout in every approach to the great God.

* The writer is far from desiring to press this on all. He knows several good and judicious men who use forms. It is utterly wrong in any to think worse of those who do so, and to consider them on that account as deficient in the gift of prayer. Do not such rather prove their own deficiency? for the true gift of prayer will be followed by charity, tenderness, and humility.

The *manner* of conducting family worship is of much importance. Be not on the one side needlessly tender about your own reputation in mere outward things, nor on the other careless and remiss. Let us have a greater awe of God's majesty than of man's presence. We will now notice some things to be avoided.

Some, by a voice too loud, or too low, or from using a particular whine or tone —or by a repulsive manner—by aiming at fine expressions, or by vulgar and coarse ones, or by excessive length, fatigue and perhaps disgust those whom they desire to edify. Let all be natural and simple, short and devout, and your voice such as you use in conversing with your friends on serious subjects. In the multiplied engagements of large towns, long prayers are not suited to the situations of most families; yet do not abridge the duty so as to make it a mere form, and as if you were glad to hurry through it. Seek, in short, to have your worship such that a piously-disposed family may rejoice when the time of prayer is come: and amid the cares, distractions and sorrows of life, may count it a relief and a privilege.

We have hitherto considered the duty of the Head of the Family. The *duties of those who join in family worship*, are, duly to prize the privilege, and to beware of a wandering, cold, and careless spirit, which will destroy all your benefit and comfort in it, whoever teaches, whoever prays. It is the joining of every heart in the requests offered up which gives to family prayer its greatest efficacy. You should agree to ask; your spirit should join the spirit of him who prays; let there be a secret "Amen" in your hearts to every petition, and thus you will obtain the promised blessing. And do not think it sufficient for you to have joined in family worship, and that you may then neglect secret prayer. Never forget to pray in secret also.

What a lovely sight it is to see a whole family thus uniting together morning and evening, preparing and being made meet, day by day, for "the inheritance of the saints in light;" obtaining on earth the humble, dependent, thankful, holy, and heavenly state of mind, which fits them for joining the family of their Lord in heaven. Whatever storms rage without, such a family obeying the direction, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, till the indignation be overpast," are safe. They are able to say, "God is our refuge and strength."

May what has been said induce *those who have hitherto lived in the neglect of this duty*, to take up at once David's firm resolution, "Surely I will not go up into the tabernacle of my house nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." Let me beseech you—lose no time—not a single day. Difficulties may be multiplied; but only set about it in faith and prayer, wisely and vigorously, and they will all vanish. Say firmly, as Jacob did to his household, and to all that were with him, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God."

And may *those who have attended to this duty*, find the hints which have been given, an additional help to the performance of it; and also feel pledged, by their prayers and instructions, to bring into the family in the day the character which they have manifested, and the graces which they requested in their united devotions.

But let them not think, as some have been ready to think, that a discharge of this duty will absolve them from the constant practice of daily morning and evening devotions in secret. He who prays only before others, has much reason to suspect that he prays to be seen of men, and has no real love to God, nor true knowledge of the nature of prayer.

CHAPTER VIII.

Social Prayer.

The term "social" may be applied to all kinds of prayer in which we join with others, but it is here restricted to the

united prayer of Christian friends, distinct from public and family worship. It would be well if Christians were more accustomed than they are to sanctify their occasional meetings by prayer, and to meet also for the purpose of uniting in prayer to obtain those blessings which they need. The particular promise given to united prayer has led many to practise this both as a privilege and as a duty. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

We have scriptural examples to encourage us to the performance of this. When Peter was in prison, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him;" and when he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, he found there "many that were gathered together, praying." When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison they comforted each other by social prayer. "Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." "When Moses' hands were heavy, Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Bishop Hall remarks on this, "Doubtless Aaron and Hur did not only raise their hands but their minds with his; the more cords the easier draught. Aaron was brother to Moses. There cannot be a more brotherly office than to help one another in our prayers, and to excite our mutual devotions. No Christian may think it enough to pray alone: he is no true Israelite that will not be ready to lift up the weary hand of God's saints."

And as social prayer is a duty binding generally on all Christians, so there is a special reason for it in some particular relations. Husband and wife should pray together, with and for each other; the Apostle appears to suppose they do so, when he adds, as a reason for some directions given to them, "that your prayers be not hindered."

There are some things which seem peculiarly to call for social prayer. Let me especially mention the state of the Church of Christ in our own country, and throughout the world, as calling for our attention. The various precepts and examples in the word of God on this subject, and the present remarkable signs of the times, evidently require the Christian's remembrance of this in all his social prayers. David gives us a solemn direction, and a copy of his prayer and determination on this subject; "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good." This will lead to prayers for the enlargement of the borders of Sion, by the conversion of the heathen. Isa. lxii. Nor should the state of your own nation be forgotten. 1 Tim. ii, 1, 2.

St. Paul hoped for deliverance from his difficulties by the Corinthians "helping together by prayer" for him, and this supposes that Christians will unite in prayer for their minister. Remember then your minister in your social meetings, it will bring a blessing on him and yourselves also. Why should not those members of a family who are under the full influence of real religion unite, at stated periods, in praying for those of their relatives that are careless and regardless of its holy truths? There are various other things of general and personal, or local interest, that need not be here specified, which afford suitable subjects for social prayer.

It is a proof of the low state of religion among us, that many, and those even real Christians, (for of them only I speak,) can meet and part in our day without praying together. Is it feared that this might be counted strange and uncommon? this is only a weak objection. The devoted Christian is an uncommon character, and must expect to be often reproached for unnecessary strictness and preciseness. Have you reason to think that this would be an unwelcome service? surely, then, you should not voluntarily be much in the society of those who would think it such. Or may not another reason be, that the conversation, even among those who have pro-

fessed to renounce the world and its vanities, is often so trifling, so worldly, and so vain—so much about man, and so little about God, and Christ, and his word, and his love, that your souls are unprepared and unfitted for communion with him.*

Watts says, "If we pray among a select society of Christians, we draw near to God with a holy boldness, something like what we use in our duties of secret worship. We have reason to take more freedom among those that are fellow-saints, and whose hearts have felt many of the same workings with our own. Then, when our faith is lively, we should give thanks to God for our election in Christ Jesus; for the atonement and righteousness of the Son of God, in which we humbly hope to have an interest; for the enlightening and sanctifying work of his own Spirit upon our hearts; for our expectations of eternal glory: and by expressing the joys of our faith to God, we may often be made a means, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to raise the faith and joy of others."

Were your social meetings thus sanctified, the occasional intercourse of dear friends would be more blessed than it is. You would find it a means of grace, and would enjoy, in a much higher degree, the privilege of the communion of saints. You would find the prayers of those who can and do pray with freedom and fervency, a great help to your own attainment of this gift. Those who have the holy fire may be the means of enkindling the sacred flame in others. You would receive a greater blessing than you have yet done in all your family and social relations. "Persons who belong to several families may, and ought to meet on these occasions. The consent of importunity is a pleasing instance of brotherly love."

Those who *join in Social Prayer*, should guard against a spirit of criticism on the prayer which they hear, and endeavour to join in the desire intended, even when they think that the mode of expression is not altogether proper, or suitable. Watch against criticising and being offended with the mere words and manner of others. Those, indeed, who do pray, should take care to avoid occasions of offence, by simplicity and propriety in their mode of conducting the prayer. But when sinful creatures kneel together before their Almighty Creator, the solemnity of the work in which they are engaged, and the greatness of his Majesty, should prevent a rigid observance of each other. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

In this, as in every other means of grace, beware of any thing like ostentation, display, or self-righteousness. Endeavour to attain Christian simplicity, "and the meekness of wisdom."

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* I cannot here but subjoin the remark which a valued friend made on this passage. He says, "Conversation among Christians often takes a trifling turn, often a party turn in politics, and often one which merely concerns the circumstantials of things, and this for the evident purpose of excluding essentials. Thus the manner of a preacher, his style, his appearance, often occupy the place which is due to his matter. Or, if the matter be introduced, it is not for the purpose of enjoying its excellence, in turning it to the exciting of present good, but rather as a ground of critique on his mode of treatment, affording a subject of ingenious remark, if not of authoritative decision. There are religious Tattlers and Busy Bodies, it is to be feared, as well as those of the world; but it should never be forgotten, that a religious gossip is less excusable than a worldly gossip. The object of the worldly is to kill time; and for this purpose characters are sported with, and idle tales and jokes indulged in. It should be the Christian's object to redeem the time, and to improve it by edifying his associates."

CHAPTER IX.

The general Habit of Prayer.

Hitherto we have dwelt on the various kinds of devotion, private, public, family, and social, which should each come in their course at stated times; but the believer's character, "I give myself unto prayer," shows that he is continually in the spirit of prayer. The Scriptures suppose that this is the habit of the Christian mind. Hence we find directions of this kind: "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all

perseverance." "Pray without ceasing." "Continuing instant in prayer."

These directions are in some measure fulfilled, by a constant attention to those kinds of prayer we have before mentioned; but they may have a yet more complete fulfillment, in the habitual disposition of the Christian's mind, his readiness at all times for prayer, and the exercise of this disposition in continual aspirations of soul, and desires expressed unto God in the midst of his other duties. These aspirations are both a great sign and means of our being spiritually minded.

Nor does this in any way hinder, but rather help attention to our various duties. A labourer's love to his family will often bring it to his mind during his work, but will only incline him to labour more constantly and cheerfully; and a Christian's love to his Saviour will have the same effect. The breathing of the lungs, and the beating of the pulse, hinder not our being engaged in other work; and the lifting up of holy desires unto God, will only quicken us, and animate us in the performance of the daily labours of our life.

The expression of this state of mind has been sometimes called ejaculatory prayer; when there is the habit of prayer, there will frequently be short, earnest petitions darted up, on the moment, to the throne of grace.

Such an habitually devout disposition of mind, will make every action of your life holy. You will learn to do nothing without connecting it by prayer with the presence and glory of God. You will see nothing, and hear nothing, without its raising your heart to him. What a spiritual life may the Christian, improving every thing by prayer, lead! This will consecrate every field, every wood, and every dwelling place. It will turn an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice. Making this heavenly use of earthly things, you will rapidly advance in conformity to the divine image, you will be strong in overcoming sin, and you will carry on schemes of good with a power which nothing can resist. In a moment you thus bring God, and his presence, and blessing, into the midst of all your concerns, and bring peace, love, and tranquillity, amidst all the cares and tumults of life, into your own heart.

"How highly," says Cooke, "would a courtier prize a private key of admittance to his sovereign at all times. This key we possess in ejaculatory prayer. It is a golden chain of union between earth and heaven."

This general spirit of devotion, prevailing in the heart at all times, is of such importance, that the chief number of *examples* of prayer which we find in the Holy Scriptures are of this kind. Were all these examples to be enumerated, it would be seen, there is no situation, nor circumstance, in which we may be placed, where such a spirit will not be suitable, and in which the blessing of God may not in this way be sought and obtained. It may be right to bring a few specimens from different parts of the sacred volume.

When the Patriarch Jacob, after much persuasion, at length permits his sons to take their brother Benjamin, his heart sends up this short, but earnest petition; "God Almighty give you mercy before the man." When Joseph sees his brother Benjamin, he suddenly prays, "God be gracious unto thee, my son."

When the Egyptians were behind the Israelites, and the Red Sea before them, and the mountains hemmed them in, and the people were repining and murmuring, in that great difficulty, the heart of Moses was with his God; and though we read of no outward prayer, yet God says to him, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward."

In a similar great extremity, when the people talked of stoning David, he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." And when, flying from his rebellious son Absalom, he was going up to Mount Olivet, one told him that Ahithophel, his counsellor, was among the conspirators, David prayed, on the moment, as he was going up the hill, "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

Nehemiah is an eminent example of the same spirit of prayer. You may observe it throughout his whole history. The following is an example. Being sor-

rowful in the presence of the king, and having stated the reason, the history goes on, "The King said unto me, For what dost thou request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, send me unto Judah." He doubtless means that he lifted up his heart to God, before he asked the king. You may see in various places how he thus brought all his actions in prayer before God, and entreated that he would remember him for them.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who left an example for us to follow, frequently thus addressed his Father. In the midst of the people, on one occasion, he said, "Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I into the world. Father, glorify thy name." Again, on the cross he says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." And he prayed there, not only for himself, but in the midst of his sufferings, beholding with pity his savage murderers, the mocking priests, and deriding people, his compassionate heart breathes out itself in the short and fervent prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O love, till then unknown! How should such an example teach us when reviled not to revile again, but rather to "pray for them that despitefully use" us!

The gracious answers vouchsafed to these prayers should encourage us to imitate the examples thus brought before us. Let us, then, fulfil our Lord's direction, "Praying always, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man."

We do not sufficiently attend to the *growth* of a a devout spirit. We are too much content with our former attainments, and often even fall short of them. But let us labour not only to keep our ground, but to make daily progress. The Christian's devotion should be like the flowing tide, which gradually gaining point after point, the retiring waves again and again returning, filling up all vacancies, advancing and still advancing, at length replenishes, in regular progress, the whole space. Let the spirit of devotion advance till it fill our whole souls.

Indeed, the truly advanced Christian is known by this mark, as much as by any other. The man after God's own heart, is the man of devotion; one who is always in prayer; who says in the morning, "when I awake I am still with thee;" and in the evening, "I will both lay me down in peace and take my rest, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." In the midst of his business he is "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." He can say, "On thee do I wait all the day." "He," says Law, "is the devout man, who considers God in every thing, who serves God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory."

Men of this world, the covetous and the impure, the licentious and the gay, even when outwardly engaged in other things, have their minds full of their particular sins. Let the Christian's heart then be filled with that great work in which he is engaged. As they pollute all their sacred duties by worldly thoughts, so let him consecrate all his common actions, by the constant and heavenly breathings of his soul unto God.

But how often is nature in the believer stronger than grace! Do not Christians sometimes pass a whole day with hardly a single devout aspiration?

Let me mention particular *seasons* which seem peculiarly to call for the exercise of this habit of prayer. What Christian can pass along the streets of a great city, and see vanity and sin every where manifested, and hear, almost on every side, oaths and curses, without praying for those whom he thus sees sunk in sin! What miserable objects continually pain his heart! And though in many cases his judgment may forbid him to give any thing to those who would only squander his bounty away, his piety will yet incline him in secret to pray for them, while thus obliged to withhold his alms. It was an excellent practice of a pious minister, never to hear an oath from any one, without praying to God for the offending individual; and, if compelled by his judgment not to relieve a beggar in the street, still to lift up his heart in secret prayer for a blessing on his soul.

In conversing with others on religious subjects, in going to the poor and afflicted, in waiting for others, in going from one place to another, in visiting your own friends, in coming to the house of God, in hearing his word, in these, and the various other circumstances of our lives, the heart of the devout Christian will be sending up many a secret petition; he will be silently wrestling with God, and gaining that divine blessing on all in which he is engaged, which others lose by carelessness and indifference.

This is the old religion; this is "the good way;" these are "the old paths." Thus Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and David walked with God; and those who "walk" thus now, "find rest to their souls." In inviting the reader to this constant intercourse with God, we are inviting him to the highest privilege—friendship with his Creator; and to his richest enjoyment—delighting himself in communion with his Lord.

Do you ask how you are you to obtain, and how you are to keep alive this spirit of prayer? You must seek it; you must cultivate it. The grace of God is is sufficient.

And first, *men need a new relationship to God*, being by nature born in sin, and afar off from God, we must first be reconciled to him by Jesus Christ. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Lay hold, then, by faith, of the great salvation provided in Christ for guilty sinners; see its fulness, its freeness; accept the offered mercy; and then, "being justified by faith," you will "have peace with God." One, when unacquainted with real religion, was much perplexed as to the meaning of the expression, so often occurring in the Scripture, of "walking with God." But, having at length embraced free salvation by a crucified Saviour, his heart was continually ascending in devout aspirations, especially in his walks; and then he said, "Now I know what it is to walk with God."

And they also need *the continual aid of the Holy Ghost*. Outward devotion may be practised by the natural man. The Mahomedans are perpetually counting their beads, and saying many prayers with their lips; a work of mere self-righteousness, or proceeding from ignorance, pride, or superstition. The Roman Catholics are not without similar superstitious practises. And many Protestants have a "form of godliness, but deny the power thereof." When the Holy Ghost is given, then, and then only, we shall belong to that company, of which the Apostle says, "we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The Holy Spirit alone can enable us to pray spiritually and constantly.

Thus reconciled to God by Christ, thus aided by his Spirit, you have the first principles of this habit of prayer, which must be cultivated by continual watchfulness, determined resolution, and patient perseverance.

CHAPTER X.

On the Spirit of Prayer for the Enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ.

Amid all that sin and sorrow which the Christian sees in the world, observes in his family, or feels in his own heart, there is one bright prospect on which his eye can dwell with unmingled satisfaction, in the anticipation of which his heart can exult with unbounded joy; the promised time when truth, and righteousness, and peace shall universally prevail. That such a time will come, a simple-minded and humble reader of the Scriptures can have no doubt. Such passages as the following plainly point out an extension of the Gospel which has never yet taken place.

"All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, and shall glorify thy name." The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the ful-

ness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever."

Observe the fulness of each of these expressions. Surely they foretell the universal spread of Christianity. To deny this, would, as Edwards has observed, be in effect to say, that it would have been impossible for God, if he had desired it, plainly to have foretold any thing that should absolutely have extended to all the nations of the earth. To suppose that these are merely high-wrought figures, and that events answerable to them are not likely to take place, is little short of supposing an intention to mislead others.

We may, then, rejoice in the delightful prospect which the Bible thus opens before us. But these promises involve a duty, as well as convey a cheering prospect; the duty of exerting ourselves to promote the coming of this kingdom. Among other means of doing so, the duty of prayer is of the first importance. This subject is so little noticed in general, and yet forms so large a part of that prayer which our Lord teaches his disciples daily to use, that though it has already been in some measure anticipated, when stating the subject of Intercession in the chapter on Private Prayer, it justly calls for distinct consideration.

While it is clear from various promises, that the kingdom of Christ shall universally prevail, it is no less manifest that there are *difficulties which only a Divine Power can overcome.*

There are many opposing powers of a nature that no arm of flesh can subdue. Man may contend with man, with some hope of success; but in contending "with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, and with spiritual wickedness in high places," we want divine aid. We must pray with the prophet, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord." How can Satan be dethroned from his palace, the heart of man, "till a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him!"

All men's natural inclinations and corrupt opinions also oppose the reception of the Gospel. Nothing is more absurd to him who knows not the Bible, and the power of God, than to imagine that the blinded Hindoo, enchained in his caste; the acute and licentious Mahomedan, reverencing his false prophet; the savage and degraded African, and the barbarous New Zealander, should give up their various notions, and embrace the pure, holy, and humbling truths of the Gospel of Christ. The means also by which this change is to be effected, appears to man utterly inefficient. The preaching of the cross of Christ is still "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" and it is evident, to make these means effectual, we must look for "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." No arm of flesh can help us here: "Not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Many of the great promises of Scripture relative to that happy period of which we have been speaking, seem to *call for the spirit of prayer.*

Observe the determination of the Saviour and his Church—"For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory:" and then notice how this determined zeal in seeking to promote the light and glory of the Church is approved and required; "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

The intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, is much on this subject. It is one part of his prayer, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." And he so earnestly desires the salvation of man, that it is called "the travail of his soul." In the second Psalm, the Father is described as addressing the Son thus: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Doubtless the Son has fulfilled this, as he has fulfilled every other part of his blessed office as

an Intercessor. Hence we have more encouragement from his intercession to pray for the conversion of the heathen, than for almost any other object. We are sure that the Son of God intercedes for us in this particular thing, and offers up our prayer. And as our Lord thus intercedes himself for the enlargement of his kingdom, so his word is full of directions and examples to encourage us to do the same.

Observe the directions to pray.—Our Lord seeing the harvest to be great, and the labourers few, instructed his disciples to use this means of obtaining them;—"Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into the harvest." One half of the prayer which he has taught us daily to use, relates to this: "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Doubtless when "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him," those petitions in the Lord's prayer, with its simple, but sublime and magnificent conclusion, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever," will receive a more manifest accomplishment than ever they have yet done. We are told in Isa. xlv, 11, "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." St. Paul thus earnestly presses this duty: "I exhort, therefore, that first of all," (as a matter of chief importance,) supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men:" and he afterwards adds, "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth:" and again he says, "Brethren pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, as it is with you."

Observe the *prophecies respecting this spirit of prayer.* "It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go unto another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts. I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord."

We have also *examples* to encourage us thus to pray. David prays, "Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." "Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces." Esther, when the peculiar people of God were on the point of destruction, sends to all the Jews to fast and pray with her and her maidens, and their united prayers are heard. Daniel's prayer for the Church, when in captivity, is well worthy of imitation. Dan. ix, 2, 16, 17. It is probable, that on the very evening of the day on which our Lord directed his disciples to pray for more labourers, he himself went into a mountain, and continued all night in prayer to God; and after thus praying all night, on the following morning he chose his twelve Apostles; Matt. ix, 36—38; x, 1—5; compared with Luke vi. 12—16. The Apostles, after his ascension, "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication:" and at length on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was given, —"The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it." The Church of Antioch "fasted and prayed," and then sent forth Barnabas and Saul on that great mission to the Gentiles, the benefits of which ultimately reached even to England. Acts xiii, 3.

And to come to more modern times. We find that holy men have ever, as they have more advanced in religion, felt more for the perishing state of mankind. Baxter thus expresses himself in some reflections at the close of his life: "My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of this miserable world, and more drawn out in a desire for its conversion than heretofore. I was wont to look little further than England in my prayers; but now I better understand the case of mankind and the method of the Lord's prayer. No part of my prayer is so deeply serious, as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world." It is worth while reading the life of the

Missionary Brainerd, only to observe the constant ardour of his soul, in praying for the coming of Christ's kingdom.

A blessing has ever attended this mode of seeking the welfare of the Church. "The cry of Israel in Egypt came up unto God by reason of their bondage; and God heard their groanings," and he sent them a deliverer. Daniel's prayer, (ch. ix,) was attended with an immediate answer. Who would have supposed that in the state in which Judea and the world were, when our Lord was crucified, that in so short a time such preachers should be raised up from the self-righteous or worldly Jews, or the benighted Gentiles, as should carry the Gospel into all the known nations of the earth, and almost convert the world. They prayed, and great was found to be the efficacy of prayer. In fact, every period of the revival of religion has been distinguished by the previous spirit of prayer. All the great Societies that have been raised in present times, and that fill and adorn our country, have been raised in prayer; and the way to obtain for them that full benefit to mankind, of which, under the blessing of God, they seem capable, is, for those who support them to give them also their continual prayers. St. Paul urges a striking reason why Christians should thus pray: "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf;" that thus, as he expresses it elsewhere, "the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."

The importance of this will be more seen, when it is remembered, that *the enlargement and building up of the spiritual Church is entirely the work of God.* Who can accomplish all the promises on this subject? Who can influence the minds of Christians in general to promote their fulfillment? Who can raise up, and prepare, and duly qualify the labourers? Who can open their way before them, and prosper their undertakings? Who can give the heathen eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to feel? And when the seed is sown in their hearts, who must give the increase? In short, through whose power and mercy must "all flesh see the salvation of God?" We need not answer the question. It must be evident how greatly, in any design to promote the kingdom of Christ, the fervent, general, continued, united, and persevering prayers of all the Church of God are needed in every step of our way. The effect to be produced manifests the necessity of a divine power. It is not a mere instruction in a particular system; it is not a mere change of sentiment; but an entire change of heart and life; the fulfilling of that promise, "I will create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you." Like the work of creation, it requires the hand of God. As it is only His power that makes the seed sown in the earth to shoot and spring up; so here, "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase." And the fervency and ardour of prayer is here especially called for. Is it not a proof that the prayer, "thy kingdom come," has been coldly uttered, when we look abroad and see the present state of the kingdom of Christ? May we not well suppose that it would have been very different had every Christian that used the prayer, fervently offered up therewith the desire of his heart to God?

It pleases the Almighty generally to work through prayer, as it is *prayer* that *gives God*, who is jealous of his honour, *all the glory.* When blessings come in answer to prayer, the praise is more generally ascribed to him to whom alone all praise belongs. The time is hastening on, when one vast song shall fill the earth "from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth;" when shall be heard, "as it were the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him." And doubtless, when, through the prayers of many, this happy period arrives, the burden of the song will be, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous

works; and blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen, and amen."

May the reader lay these things to heart, and remember how small a sacrifice the thing desired calls for. You are not here asked to give your silver and gold, or your life, though these all belong to your Saviour; but the duty now pointed out is simply that of remembering a perishing world in your prayers: and in constantly and faithfully discharging it, you are obeying the two great commands of—love to God, and love to man. Never, then, think a prayer to be at all complete, which does not include the Heathen world. Never be satisfied with a prayer, either in your closet, in your family, in your walks, with your relatives and friends, or in the house of God, in which you have not asked of God something relating to his ways being "known on earth," his "saving health among all nations." Pray for all the societies engaged in this work, either at home or abroad; for all the Missionaries sent forth among the heathen, and all preparing to go; and for all who conduct, or support Missionary efforts. As a real Christian, you will be an immense gainer by the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, and the increase of the communion of saints.

And as this is the duty of individuals, so there seems a special efficacy in *united prayer*. Much that has been said on social, family, and public worship, applies here. Let Christian assemblies, in every part of our land, come frequently together to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom; and it would be one of the happiest signs of its approach.

Let love to your Saviour, benevolence towards man, your own interest in this promised and happy era, the remarkable signs of the times, and your plain and positive duty, all combine, and influence and excite you really and often to pray, "thy kingdom come."

CHAPTER XI.

*On Distractions in Prayer.**

When the sun is above the horizon, all the stars which appear so plainly, and in such number during the night, are no longer visible; and though they are really still in the heavens, they are lost in the sun's brightness. This may illustrate a difference often observable between the Christian's striving to serve God in all things, and a worldly man who is living in habitual sin. The Christian condemns himself for unnumbered faults. He sees defects more numerous than the stars of heaven, in every part of his conduct. Even his prayers appear full of sins; he discovers in them innumerable wanderings of heart, and perpetual distractions; for there is no great sin in his life, in the blaze of which all these daily infirmities are lost, as the stars are lost in the more dazzling light of the sun. But the man of the world, whose heart is unchanged and unrenewed, thinks that he performs a meritorious service in the outward worship of God, and is not troubled, though he never feels one holy inclination. Did he but watch his heart, and know its true state; he would have to say, "I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly."

There are, indeed, many defects in our prayers; there is often great coldness in our desires, much unbelief in God's promises, improper ends in our petitions; but one principal sin in all our devotion is, the wandering of the heart.

It being of main importance to the right performance of prayer, "to attend upon the Lord without distraction," a fuller consideration of this subject may

* See Steele's "Antidote against Distractions in Prayer," from whom the Author has borrowed several ideas.

be useful. Distractions will not, indeed, be entirely cured in this life: but as a man who knows not how to swim, may gradually learn that art, so as to keep himself by degrees longer and longer above water; so here improvements may be continually made. It is possible to be more and more freed from distractions, and more and more to rise above those troublous waves.

Observe *the nature of distraction.* It is the wandering of the heart from God. Some indeed manifest this in public worship by the wandering of the eye, the irreverence of their outward behaviour, unnecessary whispering, and salutations; but I would rather dwell on the root of the evil—the wandering of the heart. In the midst of a solemn prayer, the heart will be dwelling on an earthly business, or pursuing a vain pleasure. It will be engaged in thoughts of doing good on a subject foreign to the prayer then offering up with the lips, or be led aside to circumstances relating to the subject of our prayer.*

There is a contest often carrying on in the Christian's breast during worship, of which the mere formalist is wholly ignorant. His end is gained, his conscience is satisfied, if he has appeared in the house of God, or if he has repeated his prayers—he thinks this a meritorious service, and is well pleased with himself. Not so the watchful Christian. It is his continual internal struggle to worship God in spirit and in truth. He knows the task of raising an earthly mind to heavenly things. He strives not only against worldly thoughts, but also against good thoughts which often come thus unseasonably to hinder him in attending to the present duty. In carrying on this contest, he finds the power of a carnal mind continually sinking him to the dust. He repels idle and wandering thoughts, he labours against inattention, and, perhaps, after all, he has gained but a transient moment of devotion, and he returns humbled, abased, and depressed, smiting his breast, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Nothing humbles him more than the defects of his prayers.

It is well when we are deeply affected by this wandering of the heart and mourn on account of it. But, if the writer may judge from his own experience, how often do we insult and dishonour God by a slight and perfunctory service, and yet retire from worship with little brokenness of heart, and little contrition. How would such conduct towards an earthly superior, when reflected on in sober moments, overwhelm our minds with shame and confusion of face?

To some, almost the whole of their prayers is, at times, little else but one continued distraction; they have not a single holy thought really offered up to God in any part of the service; and, alas! if the thoughts of most Christians during their worship were expressed with their prayers, what strange petitions would be found to be offered up to God! An old writer justly observes, "thinking is the mind's speaking, and the Heart-searcher can, and does more easily take notice when the mind thinks impertinently, than we can observe when the tongue speaks so." There are but few that make a real business of prayer.

There is *great evil in these distractions.* The more wandering the heart is, the more wearisome the duty; while the nearer we come to God, the more warmth, and life, and comfort we enjoy. The work of prayer not only ceases while our hearts wander, but distracted "confessions" increase guilt; distracted "petitions" only ask for a denial; and distracted "praises" tend to stop the current of mercy. We make light of distractions on account of their commonness; but God greatly condemns them. A curse is pronounced on those who do "the work of the Lord deceitfully," or negligently. God declares, "I know the

* A converted female among the liberated Negroes in Sierra Leone describes this very expressively.—She said, "Wicked thing trouble me much; me want to do good, but my wicked heart will no let me. My heart run away all this week; run all about." When asked what she meant by her heart running all about, she replied, "Suppose me pray, my heart run to my country; to Sierra Leone; all about; and then me can't say no more but Jesus Christ have mercy on me, poor thing! O my bad heart. Me tink sometimes me have two hearts; one want to do good, but the other always want to do bad. O Jesus, have mercy on me poor sinner!"

things that come into your heart, every one of them." Sins in public worship must be peculiarly offensive to the holy God. Solomon says, with marked emphasis, "I saw the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there."

It is an awful character described by David, "There is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness, their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue." Observe, too, how this sin agrees to Ezekiel's description: "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people—for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness."

God has ever shown himself to be jealous respecting those things which concern his immediate worship. Thus we find Nadab and Abihu punished with death for offering strange fire before the Lord. Lev. x, 1, 2. We read that Uzziah was smitten with death for touching the Ark of God. 2 Sam. vi, 6. The directions respecting his worship under the Mosaic dispensation were very minute and particular, which, among other things, may teach us the need of great attention in our approaches to God, and the regard which God pays to all our worship. Indeed, as one observes, "it is evidently a gross insult to the glorious God, when praying to him, to quit him in the midst of our prayers, as if we were conversing with an inferior, and to make vain excursions on every side."

Another thing which should teach us the sinfulness of distraction is, they bear the stamp of *hypocrisy*. It was the reproach of the ancient Church. "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies." Is not this a true description of much of the worship of Christians? You would not like that any fellow Christian should know what was passing in your heart during your prayers; but is it not a small matter to be judged of man's judgment? "He that judgeth me is the Lord."

Alas! when we look back on the distractions of our prayers (and the writer continually and deeply feels in his own prayers the prevalence of that evil which he has been describing,) have we not reason to fear that very few ever really pray? are we not compelled to acknowledge, how seldom they that pray oftenest, do pray; and what short prayers the best make, many words, perhaps, and but very little prayer? These things should lead us more to value the doctrines of free justification through the blood of Christ; more deeply to prize, and more earnestly to ask for the aid of the Holy Spirit; more to depend on the Saviour's intercession; and more to long to be in that blessed kingdom where we shall serve our God without weariness or wandering.

Some hints that may, by the help of God, *assist you to avoid distractions* will now be mentioned.

There may be an infirmity arising from the state of bodily health, or constitution, and the like, of which timid and anxious Christians, who are most apt to be troubled by their wanderings in prayer, should not lose sight in judging of themselves. Preston observes, "one may aim at a mark and do his best, and yet be hindered either by the palsy in his arm, or by one who jogs him when about it." But the general *cause* of our distractions is the power of Satan, and the remaining strength of corrupt nature. Though the Christian is born again of God, he has two contending parties within—"the old man," and "the new man;" and distractions mainly arise from the weakness of grace, the strength of sin, the temptations of Satan.

Remember, first of all, *your entire dependence on God.* Know your own weakness. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves;" but while you see this, know your Saviour's strength, that his "grace is sufficient for you;" and these things being duly impressed on your mind, in his strength seek to overcome this evil. For farther directions as to the assistance which you may have from God, I refer you to the chapter on the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Send up fervent petitions for Divine assistance, especially when you first find that your heart is wandering.* This is

* "Cry unto God, 'Lord wilt thou suffer thy slave to abuse thy child, before thy face, while he is on his knees for a blessing?'"

Harrison.

an effectual help. It engages the power of God against the power of Satan and sin. The Psalms are full of suitable expressions that may be used with advantage. "My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word. Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Thus contend against your spiritual enemies, and you must overcome them.

Determine to strive against wanderings. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Are you not in general going carelessly to the worship of God, as a matter of habit and custom, without much thought of engaging your heart to approach unto him? This seems to be a too general case from the enquiry, "Who is this that hath engaged his heart to approach unto me saith the Lord?" The heart must be engaged to serve God. We should resolve with Jeremiah, "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands, unto God in the heavens." Before you enter on this holy duty, pause and pray with David, "Unite my heart to fear thy name;" as if he had said, "I find my heart divided, and my thoughts dissipated; gather in all my wandering affections; may they be fixed on *one* great object; may they all be united in this single act that is before me:"

"That all my powers with all their might,
"In thy sole glory may unite." *Kenn.*

Seek to gain a spiritual mind. "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." We are only cutting off a leaf or a twig from this evil tree, while we take away a particular distraction. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved! How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Till the heart be washed from sin, by the blood of Jesus, and by the grace of his Spirit, vain thoughts will be sure to lodge, or take up an abode in you, and to mingle with all you do. The heavenly-minded Christian, whose heart is continually with God, finds it comparatively easy to keep it more closely fixed on him in the particular act of prayer. But if you are under the full influence of the carnal mind, it is utterly impossible that you can offer spiritual worship. "You must be born again." Such want an entire new heart. When they gain that, they may the better hope to attend upon the Lord without distraction. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," and then there will not be the difficulty which you find in fixing your thoughts, and staying your mind on God, during the act of prayer.*

Men of the world are not distracted about their worldly business, but will pursue it with all fixedness and intention of mind, hour after hour, day after day, and year after year. They have an earthly mind, and love earthly things. Seek you to have a spiritual mind, and then you will thus pursue spiritual things. All the lines of your affection should unite here; all the radii of the circle should meet in this centre—in a fixedness of heart on God in his worship.

The circumstances of our prayers often lead our minds from God. We have to think of our sins, and their circumstances, when we confess them, and of our wants when we pray for what we need, and of our mercies when we thank God for them, and of our friends when we intercede for them; but if the mind were in a spiritual state, these things would rather be the means of drawing our hearts nearer to God, than of drawing them from him. Our thoughts should not so run out on the particulars of worship, as to forget the presence of Him whom we worship.

Persevere in Prayer, notwithstanding distractions. In the path of duty, every obstacle gives way to the faith of the Christian. When the Israelites were come to the Red Sea, and to the waters of Jordan, they were directed to go forward. It might have been objected, If we go forward, shall we not be drowned? But still their duty was to go forward; and so shall we go in the path of a plain command, leaving to our God the removal of all obstacles. The reluctance and the discouragement of prayer will be overcome in the performance of the duty.

* See Owen's Grace and Duty of being spiritually minded.

When their heart is in this distracted frame, in private prayer, by giving more time to the duty, and dwelling on the petitions till you are able to attend to what you say, you will often be enabled to overcome your difficulties. "Patience is a grace as necessary sometimes in devotion, as in afflictions; and the want of patience does as often make our devotions defective as the want of recollection."

The difficulty of praying without distraction, and the fact that distractions do mingle with our holiest services, should inculcate many practical *lessons;* such as humility, brokenness of spirit, and, as has been already noticed, entire dependence on Christ for righteousness and strength, breathings after the influence of the Spirit, and a longing to be in heaven, where all our services will be pure and holy. That prayer is not lost which produces any of these effects. Nay, if a distracted prayer do but deeply humble us, it may be one of our most profitable prayers.

And when our distractions are lamented, and our desire after spiritual blessings unfeigned, it may encourage us to remember that we pray to a Father. A little child often finds a difficulty in expressing its wants to an earthly father; yet he, being desirous to meet the wishes of the child, will be ingenious, and patient, to discover and supply those wishes: so shall our "heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him."

Our incapacity, indeed, is not physical, but moral; yet God, notwithstanding these many sins, considers those who trust in his Son as children, and pities them, and spares them, "as a man spareth his son."

CHAPTER XII.

On Devotional Feelings, merely.

There are a number of persons whom we have no reason to believe to be under the influence of real religion; their tempers are frequently unsubdued and irritable; their affections, in the main, are worldly; and their pride of heart is evident; that yet express themselves in a devout way, and talk as if they found pleasure in devotion. The beauties of creation, the charms of nature, the fancied pictures which they draw of the goodness of the Deity, fill their minds with lively ideas of the benevolence of the Creator. They love to contemplate these things, and to converse about them in a strain of devout admiration and praise. Deists and idolaters sometimes express themselves in this way; and Socinians often talk as if their view of religion encouraged real devotion.

What then are the great defects of the kind of devotion which has been described? It is accompanied by some one or other of the following marks.

With respect to those who profess to have it, it has little or no influence on the temper, which still remains unsanctified, either self-indulgent or fretful, and exposed to bursts of passion. It puffs up, and fosters pride of heart, and fills the mind with self-conceit and self-sufficiency. It leads men to court rather than shun the admiration of others; or, it is often a mere indulgence of natural imagination, of a pensive disposition, of taste, and the like. Pleasurable sensations are excited by the idea of the dignity of such contemplations, and it is supposed that they indicate a superior state of mind to the common class of persons, and this pleases and satisfies the carnal mind.

With respect to God, it has no regard to his holiness or justice; it overlooks the Scripture account of his character, and those sorrows and evils of life which visibly mark his hand and the sinfulness of man. It greatly, if not totally, disregards the only mediator by whom we may draw near to God. "No man cometh to the Father but by Him."

And with respect to others, there is little or no separation from vain and sinful company, from worldly habits, practices, and maxims; no fulfilling of the precept, "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;" and therefore no obtaining of the promise, "and I will receive you, and I will be a father

unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

In the feelings to which we allude, there is no real communion with God: that is ever humbling and purifying. Men of the description which has been mentioned, know nothing of the character of God as "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy;" who says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

This deceptive appearance of devotion sometimes arises from a spurious sentimentality; from notions not founded on the word of God, but on human fictions and vain reasonings, or foolish imaginations, assuming the character without the Scriptural reality of religion. Sometimes men of real devotion, (like Law in his "Spirit of Prayer,") have gone off into that which is mystical and unintelligible. Let us in all things adhere to the written word. This sort of devotion is not that plain, simple, home, and every day life religion which so eminently marks the discourses of our Saviour, and of his Apostles. It has its seat more in the imagination of a recluse, than in a broken spirit, enlightened and humbled by Divine Truth, and under the teaching of the Spirit, brought to a real knowledge of the excellence and glory of the Divine Being, of our great corruption, our inestimably precious Redeemer, our entire dependence on his grace, and a filial confidence in a reconciled Father.

At other times such feelings may arise from mere animal sympathy. In a social meeting, or in a congregation, both he who offers up the prayers, and they who join will be deeply affected and moved by the solemnity of the place, by the number assembled, by the manifestation of their feelings, or by the sacred music which they may hear; these things naturally have, and ought to have, an impressive effect on every mind; we do not object to this effect, but to the mind's resting satisfied with it, as the sum of devotion. It is possible that the whole effect of such a service may be the mere excitement of the animal frame, apart from all those really devotional principles which come from above; a mere impression on the senses, quite distinct from communion with God himself, and all that holy state of mind which God alone bestows and regards.

That corrupt church which in its devotional exercises, in direct contradiction to the plain testimony of Scripture, uses a language not understood by the common people, cultivates much among its adherents, by show, pomp, music, and outward solemnity, this mere impression on the mind and senses of the worshippers. You may also behold among them, persons with the greatest appearance of devotion, satisfying their conscience by numerous repetitions of prayers counted by beads. Our Lord decidedly condemns all such worship.

There are those also in the Protestant churches, whose whole aim seems to be, merely to be deeply affected, while in prayer, and who consider that the being much impressed and excited, is the highest degree of devotion.

Let the reader, then, be on his guard, and not suppose that every thing of a contemplative, or sensitive, or exciting nature, with a devotional cast, is real devotion and acceptable to God.

Yet there is a true devotional feeling, essential to our well-being and happiness, of the greatest value and importance, and producing the most blessed effects, a devotion which humbles and yet raises, which softens asperities of temper, and yet makes the self-indulgent self-denying and firm; which changes the worldly into the heavenly mind; which heightens every enjoyment, mitigates every trial and suffering, gives peace within, and spreads cheerfulness and happiness without. St. John describes it, when he says, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The former part of this treatise will have shown the reader the nature of this devotion, and the following directions are added to assist him in attaining it.

CHAPTER XIII.

Directions to assist in attaining the Spirit of Prayer.

The duty and privilege of the various kinds of prayer have now been brought before the reader. They should all be attended to; they are each beautiful, and needful in their season. A Christian will not attend public and neglect family worship; he will not pray in his family, and neglect his secret devotions; he will not pray statedly in secret, and neglect social or habitual prayer. Each will come regularly in its fit place and time, without interfering with the other; each not hindering, but succeeding, and mutually helping the other. Nor will he count all this course of prayer burdensome and wearisome. To enjoy the presence of God is his happiness, and therefore he longs to live in the continual practice of prayer. Your views of devotional exercise as a task or a privilege, are a test by which you may judge of your progress in religion, if not of its reality.

And while there will, in the advanced Christian, be a constant attention to all these kinds of prayer, he will especially attend to the spirit in which each is performed. It will not be sufficient to satisfy his mind that he has gone through the mere act of devotion; he labours for the inward feeling as well as the outward expression. He longs for the spirit of prayer, which is not the mere business of this or that hour, but the continual panting and breathing of the heart after God, at all times.

Ardent love to God is, indeed, the true spring of genuine prayer. Where this is, all other graces will follow. "Love," says one, "renders prayer delightful to ourselves, and acceptable to our Maker. It makes us willing to ask, and willing to receive."

Andrew Gray also observes, "The spirit of prayer consists more in the voice of the affections, than the voice of words." He suggests the following queries to detect the want of the spirit of prayer—Do you know what it is to go to prayer on an internal principle of love, and the grace of Christ constraining you? —Do you know what it is by prayer to attain greater conformity to God, and the mortification of your lusts? Do you know what it is to distinguish between absence and presence? Do you know what it is to sit down and lament over absence from Christ, and think this an insupportable want?

I have endeavoured under each kind of prayer, to give such hints as might assist you in attaining this spiritual worship; it may not be useless to sum up these hints in a few practical rules applicable to prayer in general. Only let the reader again remember, what we are apt perpetually to forget, but what should both humble, direct and comfort us, that no knowledge of rules is of itself sufficient to enable us to pray; it is the Holy Spirit alone impressing the rule on the heart, that can enable us rightly to worship God.

"To maintain a devotional spirit, two things," says Mrs. More, "are especially necessary: habitually to cultivate the disposition, and habitually to avoid whatever is unfavourable to it." We will first point out some things which hinder your attaining the spirit of devotion, and then add some directions which may help you to attain it.

Sect. I.—*Rules relating to Hindrances to Prayer.*

1. *Renounce all known sin and sensual indulgence.*—The allowed practice of any sin is utterly inconsistent with devotional feelings. If you live in habitual sin, or in the indulgence of evil tempers, or if any "corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," you cannot at the same time enjoy communion with God. 1 John i. 6; iii. 21—23. His Spirit is grieved, and withdraws its influence. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." Any sin indulged, raises those fears, doubts, disorders, and tumults in the mind which make it averse to, and incapable of, fervent affectionate prayer. An instance or two may confirm this remark. St. Paul exhorts us to "pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting." I am sure, if

you have any Christian experience, you know that it is necessary, that "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice," if you would gain the spirit of prayer. An unforgiving temper, also, not only hinders the spirit of devotion, but also prevents the acceptance of your petitions. Our Lord says, "Go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Bishop Taylor, in a beautiful figure, shows the evil effects of anger as an impediment to devotion. "Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer directly contrary to that disposition which makes our prayers acceptable to God. Thus the lark, rising from its bed of grass, soars upward, singing as he rises, but the poor bird is beaten back by the sudden blast of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it can recover by the libration of its wings, till the little creature is forced to sit down, and pant, and stay till the storm is over, and then it makes a more prosperous flight, and rises still, and sings, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel." Again; immoderate, or unnecessary indulgence of ease, appetite, sleep, &c. are serious obstacles to the attaining a devotional spirit. The man of self-denial will, like Daniel, (ch. i. 12,) be the man of prayer. Chap. vi. 10. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life," is a solemn admonition of the Lord before he gave the charge, "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always." Our sins are one great reason why our prayers are not oftener heard. "When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood." Remember St. John's remark: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." See farther passages—Ps. iv, 3; xxvi, 6; xxxiv, 15, 17; Prov. viii, 32; James v, 16; John ix, 31. Yet remember, the meaning of these passages is not that we must not pray if we have committed actual sin; for then none would pray: but that we are not to go to our prayers with the love of sin, or with a purpose to go on sinning still.*

2. *Be not conformed to the world.*—We hope that the happy day is coming on when "all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him;" but, at present, who can go much into the world, unless his duties call him there, without suffering from it? For a Christian to enter into worldly company and join in vain amusements, is, as if a man were to put a burning torch into water: the flame of devotion will be, must be extinguished. Those who go into a large manufactory, filled with people and machines, find it difficult, when in the midst of such a scene, to converse with each other; but those who go much into the bustle of company, find it still more difficult to hold converse with God. It is only when compelled to be there in the way of duty, and not otherwise, that they may expect, that, as his special grace preserved Daniel in the spirit of prayer, even in Babylon, so it will preserve them. Being immoderately engaged in worldly business, is another hinderance, filling a man with the cares of this life. He whose whole time is incessantly occupied in worldly affairs, finds his heart entirely distracted, and utterly unfited for holy and retired duties. The Apostle says, "Be careful for nothing;" and then adds, "but in every thing, by prayer and

* Sir Matthew Hale, in his Treatise on the Knowledge of God, well remarks—"A frequent, solemn, and serious use of the duty of prayer interrupts a custom of sin, by degrees weakens the old man, and will in time make a strangeness between our lusts and our souls. And let a man be sure of these *two truths:* that as he that comes upon his knees with a secret purpose to hold confederacy with any sin, he shall be the worse, the more hardened, and the more neglected by that God which searches the heart; so whosoever he be that comes to his Maker in the integrity of his heart, though sin adheres as close to that heart of his, as his skin does to his flesh, shall find that employment will make those lusts that were most dear to him, by degrees to become strange and loose to his soul."

supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God." O believe me, it is far better to have a small income, with a quiet conscience and a devout heart, than the largest income without God's blessing.

3. *Resist the temptations of Satan.*—There is a powerful spiritual adversary of man, "who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Here is your great enemy. Other things are but his engines. His object in other things is to keep you from, or hinder you in prayer. "Be not ignorant of his devices." He will suggest that prayer is a dull and gloomy service, or useless and vain. If these do not succeed, he will suggest the putting off the duty to another opportunity, on account of some other employment: some favourite book to be read, some letter perhaps to be written, or some other business which he will propose to your mind, important perhaps in itself, but "not good for this time." Consider every thing which would tempt you to neglect prayer, in its appointed season, whether it be any of those objections which have been answered already, (see p. 107, &c.) or the fear of man's ridicule, or love of ease, or any other cause, as a mere temptation, and "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." This evil spirit will be "cast out by prayer and fasting." Does he present to you various difficulties? Remember, that nothing excellent is obtained without effort and difficulty. Remember, men pursue human schemes of great difficulty, amidst every opposition; they go through the most arduous enterprises, without any certainty of success, or any promise of Divine help. In seeking communion with God, you are sure to succeed, and have his faithful promise that he will help you. Will you not be condemned by the conduct of men in general, respecting the things of this world, if difficuilties should deter you from endeavouring to obtain a good which, as a Christian, you must acknowledge to be the greatest and most profitable that can be gained in the present life? Difficulties give way to real efforts. "Prayer is in its nature a kind of wrestling and striving for a victory, which pre-supposes an opposition." The opposition of Satan will be vanquished by a steady resistance in the strength of your Saviour.

4. *Beware of a self-righteous spirit*, or any thing like fancying, because you have said your prayers, and especially, if you have prayed with more than ordinary freedom and affection, that therefore you deserve any thing from God, or are holy and righteous in his sight. Such a view of yourself, provokes God to withdraw his Spirit, and leaves you to your own natural barrenness and dryness. Nay, if you trust in your prayers, and put them in the place of your Saviour, they will as much ruin your immortal soul, as the grossest sins. This is a very common temptation, of which we are all in danger. Even the excellent Milner describes himself as naturally always setting up for himself, always aiming at independence, and that it was with the utmost difficulty he was brought to feel what a poor, sinful creature he was by nature. This spirit of self-righteousness manifests itself in complacency and self-satisfaction when any thing right has been done, and in overwhelming despondency and depression after our sins. But we should learn to rejoice in Christ alone when most lively in the way of duty, and to trust in him alone when most low. Nothing is more natural to us, than, when we have been greatly assisted, and our heart softened, and our mind enlarged in prayer, to flatter ourselves, and trust in our performance. But as in the flood, neither the tallest tree, nor the highest mountain saved any of the ungodly world who were shut out of the ark, the only refuge; so Jesus Christ alone can save us. The directions of the pious Anselm to the sick man, are in point here. "See, then," he says to him, "while life remains in thee, that thou repose thy confidence only in the death of Christ,—trust in nothing else; commit thyself wholly to his death—cover thyself with this alone. And if the Lord will judge thee, say, 'Lord, I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between myself and thy judgment, otherwise I will not engage in judgment with thee.' And if he shall say unto thee, 'Thou art a sinner!' say, 'I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sin.' And if he shall say, 'Thou hast

deserved damnation!' say, 'Lord, I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my evil deserts, and I offer his merits for that merit which I ought to have had, and have not.'" One good man said, "I am more afraid of my duties than of my sins, for my duties make me often proud, but my sins make me always humble." Though an expression of this kind may be somewhat unguarded, it may show us, in a striking way, a danger which many Christians hardly even suspect. O rest not, then, in any duties; put no confidence at all in them as grounds of salvation; "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," and rest wholly on him. Let prayer be the way by which you gain an interest in him and his salvation, and not be a means of keeping you from a sole trust in him.

5. *Guard against improper motives and ends in your prayers.*—Sinful motives are apt perpetually to mingle with and defile all we do. Let not the procuring an esteem for sanctity, conscientiousness, and spirituality, for great parts or gifts, for readiness and copiousness of invention, memory, and judgment, be your motives to pray. One prayer is worth ten thousand fine thoughts. Let not your design be to show that you can pray much, and are well furnished with matter; nor yet to manifest that you are good Church-goers, never miss prayers, and can pray with an acceptable or pleasing delivery of voice. Let not the vain glory of praying long, and frequently in every place, "as the hypocrites standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men," whom our Lord reproved, let not this be the end for which you pray. Rather pray, desiring thereby to be disposed and enabled to serve God and the world, to live profitably and comfortably, and to be prepared and meet for immortal and everlasting reward. And remember, that the glory of God should be the ultimate end at which you aim in all your prayers. Our design in asking any thing from God should be to render it again to him: and while we propose this to ourselves, we are the more likely to obtain our requests. It has been said, "Wicked and unthankful men are but like vapours and exhalations, drawn up out of the earth, which do but eclipse the sun that raises them; so it is when God raises up these men by his bounty and goodness, who by their wickedness and ingratitude stain and eclipse his glory in the world. Whereas godly men are like rivers, which, as they receive all their streams from the sea, so they return all again into the sea: so, whatever truly devout persons receive from God, they improve all for, and return all again unto him." And therefore they may well hope to speed, who beg mercies at the hand of God, that they may return all again to his glory.

6. *Take heed of spiritual pride.*—Let us remember, "God hath respect to the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off." One reason why we do not receive more help from God, may be this,—we could not have it without danger to our souls. It is justly observed, "When the heart is enlarged in prayer, and good expressions come with great fluency from the lips, how apt is he that prays to have high conceits of himself and of his performances! His mind is prone to wander, and think what others think of him, and is sinfully pleased in the imagination, that they are admiring him. Such thoughts as these—How well do I pray! How broken for sin do I appear! How fervent in spirit do I seem! What credit and applause shall I get by this performance! What an excellent saint shall I be accounted! Such thoughts are apt to hover about an enlarged heart: but if they are not kept out with an utter detestation of them, the heart will be distracted with pride, how heavenly soever are the expressions of the mouth."* Frequently contemplate the glorious perfections of Jehovah. Those who see and know most of him are most humbled before him. The more we see of his glory, the more we shall discover of our own insignificance. It is only in proportion as we are far from God that we are pleased with ourselves. We want more Christian simplicity and humility; a more entire sense of own nothingness, of

* Vincent on Distractions.

our emptiness of all good; and then we should neither fancy ourselves to be any thing, nor fancy that we are more devout than others. "If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." A right knowledge of the true character of your best prayers, will rather lead you to the deepest humility, and will incline you to look more simply for the power of the Spirit, and to the intercession of Christ.

.7 *Neglect not the Holy Scriptures.* If you disregard the word of God when he speaks, you cannot expect that he should attend to you when you are speaking to him. Remember what is said; "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. Or again; "Because I have called and ye refused—ye have set at naught all my counsel—they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Is not neglect of the Scriptures one great reason of the Christian's barrenness in devotion? The word of God is a rich mine of devotional feeling and expression. Become, then, more acquainted with it. They cannot be devout who are ignorant of the state of their own souls, and of the truths of the Bible. It is not want of ability to express ourselves, but want of feeling, that is the greatest difficulty to be overcome: and while you are unacquainted with those truths of the word of God, which would discover to you your own character and state; while you know not the perfections of God, his holy precepts, and his precious promises, and the prospects which his word sets before you respecting another state, how can you feel aright on these subjects? You necessarily want the great food of prayer. Those who have but poor abilities, have often been enabled, by knowledge of the Scriptures, most impressively to pray to God. Were our minds more imbued with the sacred truths of the Bible, we should never be in want of matter for confession, petition, intercession, and praise. All its prohibitions and threatenings would give you expressions of confession; all its precepts, of petition; and all its promises, of thanksgiving. A right knowledge of the Bible is one of the best helps of devotion. It would be well when you read that sacred book, to extract any passage affecting your mind for prayer. Study the Psalms of David in this view. The primitive Christians used to learn the whole book by heart, and thus have prayers ready for every occasion. Would not this be a profitable exercise for the young? And the Bible is not only useful as furnishing matter for your prayers, but when read in faith and humility, it is wonderfully calculated to excite devotional feelings, and to quicken our hearts in calling on God. All devout persons have, like David, loved the law of the Lord.*

The hindrances which have been mentioned may perhaps solve that which has often been a difficulty in the minds of persons who have seen no good effect produced by the prayers of some professors. The duty of prayer may be discharged so erroneously and carelessly, with such a mixture of sin, and impure motives; men's affections may still be so engaged in the world, that there is little or no real desire of heart, little or no true prayer. When they arise from their knees, their petitions are quite forgotten; the occupations of the world come on; and if any good affections or desires have been excited, they are choked by the cares of this life. Hence we may see those, who neglect not stated seasons of prayer, and give much time to it, still yielding like others to bad tempers: and though probably some general good may arise from their prayers, yet there is little perceptible difference between them and those who pray not at all. This shows the necessity of praying in a right spirit, in order to gain the advantage promised to this great duty.

* Gray, a writer who has already been quoted, speaks of the following impediments to prayer. —"Our low design. We pray in secret that we may be more fitted to pray abroad. We aim at honour to ourselves, not glory to God.—Our formality, or prayer without faith and love.—Our neglect of seeking the Spirit.—Our not employing Jesus as a mediator.—Our earthly, worldly minds.—Our resisting and grieving the Spirit in our ordinary walks.—Our pride of heart." The knowledge of these difficulties and impediments is one step towards overcoming them.

SECT. II.—*Rules to assist in attaining the Spirit of Devotion.*

1. *Look for the aid of the Holy Spirit.* Undoubtedly the great helper of the soul, in devotional exercise, is the Holy Ghost. Without his aid we cannot at all pray aright or acceptably to God. Be not content, then, unless you obtain this assistance. Be not content with a formal circle of duties, without the life, pleasure, and power of religion. You ought not to be satisfied without receiving the promises, and "praying in the Holy Ghost." He helpeth the infirmities of Christ's people. He is the "Spirit of adoption," enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father;" and therefore if you are a true disciple of Christ, you ought to expect, and obtain his help. Think that prayer very defective in which your mind is not sensible of the Divine presence, in which your heavenly Father does not manifest his presence by imparting to you some feelings of sorrow for sin, some holy thirstings and longings after the grace and blessings of God, some ardent desires after holiness and conformity to his will; which feelings and desires are manifestly the fruit of his Spirit. Every man is more or less with his Lord in prayer, as he is more or less under the teachings of the Holy Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Through this divine influence hindrances are removed, and all those graces imparted, which are required in acceptable prayer. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us, and leads us by him to the Father. Ever remember, then, that the "preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord." "'The spirit of grace and supplication' is like a quickening spirit, entering into a dead body, that insinuates life and activity into all the parts, conveys a warmth into every limb, and gives a freshness and beauty to the whole; which, whatever other perfections it may have, is, without this, but a languid, cold, dead, or lifeless thing." Prayer, then, for the aid of the Holy Spirit, is the best preparation for prayer. Plead the promise, "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Urge the entreaty, "Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name."

2. *Trust only in the name of Jesus Christ.* To pray in the name of Christ, is rightly to view and depend on his intercession, his atonement, his purchase, and his strength. This is the only prevailing plea. Be persuaded of your own sinfulness and guilt. Mention none other name, but the name of Jesus; none other merits but the merits of Jesus, when you approach unto God. Have a constant eye to his intercession, saying with Jeremiah, "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake." The assurance that you have such a High Priest, should exceedingly encourage you in approaching to, in continuing at, and retiring from, the throne of grace. All your prayers are defective and defiled; but Jesus offering up even such prayers, (as was shown at large in the 3rd chapter,) through His intercession, they become effectual; while the most fervent prayer you ever made, if it fostered a self-righteous spirit, and was trusted in, instead of Christ, will only add to your guilt, and increase your condemnation. Regard his atonement. He has made peace by the blood of his cross; and "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Here then is a sufficient ground of confidence in your approaches to God. Consider his purchase. All the blessings that you need, and for which you ask, were bought by his blood, and are laid up ready for you, to be received on asking. Heaven itself is a purchased possession. Depend on his strength. Without Christ "you can do nothing; but you may say "I can do all through Christ strengthening me." You can only get near to God in and by Christ Jesus. Let this name of Christ encourage you to begin your prayer, notwithstanding all your defects. "Coming to the throne of grace in Christ's name," says Trail, "is another thing than men commonly take it to be. Some think it is only to say in their prayers, 'for Christ's sake.' To ask in His name is a higher business than to be reached by unbelievers, and men devoid of the Spirit of God. If "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" "how shall men call on him in whom they have not believed?"

But can you take the searcher of hearts to witness, that you build all your hopes of acceptance at the throne of grace in the name and mediation of Jesus! Can you say, I have no name to come to God in, but Christ's? since all that came in his name were welcome, I will come also: having no plea but Christ's name, no covering but his robe of righteousness —I will expect answers of peace and acceptance, only in that blessed beloved. As much as Christ is out of your minds in praying, so much are you out in praying, and your praying out of that it ought to be. That which we beg is out of Christ's store. In whose name do we beg it, but in his? For whose sake, but for his? Out of whose hands do we receive what we ask and get, but out of his? It is marvellous that people should pretend to prayer, and think they pray, who yet forget Jesus Christ, who is all in all, in all right prayer."

3. *Be watchful.* "Watch unto prayer." It is observable how frequently watchfulness and prayer are joined together by our Lord and his Apostles. Jesus Christ says, "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape." St. Paul says, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same," and St. Peter after saying, "the end of all things is at hand," exhorts them, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

You should watch *for favourable opportunities of prayer.* In some happy moments, when circumstances concur to to call us to this duty, a more than ordinary divine influence seems to be granted to the Christian, disposing and inclining his heart to pray, and wonderfully assisting him with suitable thoughts and desires. There is a full breeze, as it were, of spiritual aid vouchsafed. In this case, we should spread every sail, seize the happy opportunity, "be instant in prayer," and make large advances towards the haven where we would be.

Watch *against* those *hindrances* which have already been mentioned, and need not be repeated. Your hearts are evil, watch over them at all times. This is needful to keep them in a proper state for prayer. Worldly mindedness, or the indulgence of any sin in the heart, gradually unfits us for approaching Him, who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Watch also *for matter for prayer.* Maintain a temper always ready to converse with God. "A man should be careful," says Bishop Wilkins, "to keep a register of the most remarkable passages of his life, as to God's dealings with him, and his conduct towards God; his sins and defects; his sufferings and wants; his mercies and enjoyments. A common-place-book of this kind, arranged under the various heads of prayer, would be of great use."

Watch also *over your hearts in prayer.* If there be one time more than another, when the duty, "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," is incumbent on us, it is in the time of intercourse with the Majesty of Heaven. We should then specially take heed of uttering the words of penitence, faith, hope, and love, without a penitent, believing, hoping, and loving state of mind.

Lastly, watch for *answers to your prayers.* Take notice how they prosper, and whether you really gain what you ask. It has already been observed, how much comfort we lose by negligence in this respect. "I know," said one, "that the Bible is true, because I pray to God through Christ, and he hears me. I know also that God regards me, and loves me, because he gives me those very blessings which I ask at his hand." David found this a great means of increasing his love to God, and his spirit of prayer also. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." In the morning you prayed for such and such blessings, to be enjoyed in the day; at night, then, ask yourself, Did I gain these blessings? if so, "Praise the Lord:" if not, you did not ask in faith, or according to the will of God; or the Lord delays an answer to try your faith. Here are reasons for humiliation, confession, and persevering prayer.

All this watchfulness requires great patience and perseverance. It is easy to

go through the round of outward forms and duties, but it is another thing to be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Hence, though the devout man be truly blessed, he is an uncommon character.

4. *Meditate before you pray.*—This is a most important part of preparation for prayer. We do not reflect on our state, we do not look within before hand, and therefore we have so little fervency, or divine unction in our prayers. "While I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue." We are apt to think time lost which is not spent in sensible and active duty; but devout thoughtfulness and reflection redeem time for the most valuable ends. Previous to private prayer, endeavour to compose your thoughts, to attain a settled, calm, and attentive mind. Ask yourself, Why do I retire? what is my design? Examine yourself, and note down all that occurs in your mind as proper or advantageous to be said under each head of prayer. Self-examination should precede prayer. Consider before-hand the particular things which you wish to ask of God, so that you may ask freely, in order, and with method, those things which you need. And while approaching the house of the Lord for public worship, it is advantageous to meditate on the great work in which you are about to be engaged. The son of Sirach says, "before thou prayest, prepare thyself; and be not as one that tempts God." The musician sees that his instrument is in tune before he begins to play on it; and we should surely prepare our minds for prayer and praise. "Let your prayer," says the Rev. Mr. Adam, "be short, and think a long time before you begin, what you are going to say, and what you mean by it; that is, to speak plainly, whether you would be taken at your word, and put to the pain of having your prayers answered." "He who would pray," says Bishop Horne, "must first retire. Meditation, which is the mother of Devotion, is the daughter of Retirement. They who do not meditate, cannot pray; they who do not retire, can do neither." Profitable subjects of meditation abound. Consider the promises of God made to prayer; the character of Him you approach; and your own sinfulness. In the morning call to mind the duties which are before you in the approaching day, and ask for grace to fulfill them. In the evening, think on all that has occurred in the past day, and thus you will be better able to confess your sins, and to bless God for his mercies. And continue in meditation, says Bishop Taylor, "till you get some new arguments against sin, or some new encouragements to virtue, some spiritual strength and advantage, or some act of prayer to God, or praise of him." Gerson justly observes, that "Meditation is the nurse of prayer." "My mouth," says David, "shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." The sickle must be sharpened before we reap:—let us, then, by meditation, prepare our hearts for effective prayer.

5. *Ask in faith.*—The Scriptures insist much on this: James i. 6; Heb. x. 22; Matt. xxi. 22; Mark xi. 24. All true prayer comes from faith, Rom. x. 12, and is the voice and expression of faith. You need, in order to gain the true spirit of devotion, an unwavering belief "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" that he is able to give us all we ask, and if it be for our real good, will do so. By faith realize his presence. Say with David, "He is about my path and about my bed." Fully believe that his Almighty power can help and save even in the uttermost extremity, and that he is willing to hear you when you call upon him. It is, in short, a true faith that will make all the difference between a cold, heartless, unprofitable form, like praying (as one expressed it to me) to nothing but empty air, and the real desire of the believer, which, poured out unto God for all things according to his will, is sure to succeed—because Christ hath purchased every blessing, and intercedes for us; it will make all the difference between a mere ceremony and the soul-reviving and heart-cheering presence of God. To faith in the presence of God, join an undoubting confidence in the faithfulness of his promises. Vincent says, "If we did

but firmly believe that God, according to his covenant, for his Son's sake, has pardoned sin, and will heal our souls of their distempers, and will give grace sufficient, and make us to grow and increase with the increase of God; verily his promises would appear to be real, and according to our faith it would be to us." This confidence is perfectly consistent with the deepest humility, and the most entire distrust of ourselves. The larger our expectations are, the greater sense do we show of the generosity and bounty of our unseen, but ever-present, and ever-gracious Benefactor. "We should endeavour," says Watts, "to impress our minds frequently with a fresh and lively belief of God's existence, though he be so much unknown; of his presence, though he be invisible; and of his just and merciful regard to all the actions of men." Some have found it a means of strengthening their faith, to appeal, in the midst of their prayers, to the attributes of God, and to plead his promises, and the name of his Son.

"The spirit and life of prayer in faith," says Trail, "lies more in expectation than in asking. Unwise Christians let out the vital spirits of prayer, when they let their expectations languish. When they set their face to pray, they make some conscience of searching out their wants; they labour to improve that sight to the raising of fervent desires of a supply of them: if they yet go higher, to take in a sense of the fulness and freeness of that grace where their help is; yet, how rarely are they careful to raise up expectations of that helping grace! Few can say, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me." Our way is, if we could see the glory, then we would believe; Christ's way is just the contrary; we must first believe, and then we shall see the glory of God." John xi. 40. "It is the very nature of prayer in faith," says Walker,* "to cast all manner of care and every burden on the Lord; guilt, corruption, trial, temptation, whatever it be, to come and lay it all upon Christ; and this with a certain confidence in him, which both does him the highest honour, and makes him best pleased with us. It charges Christ with all, and leaves every thing with him. It says, 'Lord, here are all these sins that I have done; here are all these temptations I have to struggle with; here are all these corruptions to subdue; here is all this work to be performed; and I am a poor helpless thing: behold, I humbly lay it all upon thee, and leave it all and every part with thee. And I know that thou canst, and thou hast told me that thou wilt take care of the whole. It is thy gracious office to do so, and thou delightest to do it; Lord, I cast all my care on thee.' There is no other boldness in this than that to which the promises of God encourage and give sanction. Such is the very prayer of faith."

6. *Be simple, reverent, and grave.*—Simplicity in our prayers is a great attainment. Beware of setting more value on ingenious and original thoughts, than on devout affections, fixedness of mind, and devotedness of heart. One part of the true character of prayer is, to express all our necessity to our God with the utmost plainness and simplicity, as David did, when he could say, "I poured out my complaint before him, I showed before him my trouble." No art is needed; no extraordinary talent required; the right feeling of the heart is the great thing. "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them." But avoid haste and precipitation, as if you were going through a task which you wished to be over, that you may get to your worldly employments. Remember, this, this is the grand business. It is the most serious and solemn affair in which you can be engaged. Any thing like affectation, any thing that borders on an undue attention to elegance of language, or approaches to mere vehemence of gesture, should be carefully avoided. Let us not mimic devotion, but seek to be really devout. Avoid also any particular tone of voice. The character of prayer is well stated by Bonnell, where he observes, "Devotion is to the soul what blood is to the body, which is the life of it. The best state of the body

* See his Fifty-two Sermons on the Church Catechism.

is when the blood moves regularly and evenly, and we are least sensible that we have such a thing as moving blood within us. It is so when it is in its best condition, and we are in firm health. Convulsive and extraordinary motions in our bodies are not signs of health, but of sickness. So our soul is in the best state, when our mind, in our devotion, has a composed and gracious intercourse with God, in such intenseness and recollectedness of thought, that we are hardly sensible ourselves that we are at our devotion."* "Fine words and eloquent phrases," says Parr, "are not that wherein God delights; but reverence, contrition, faith, and the groanings of the spirit, however homely the words be. Strive more to pray with feeling than to be eloquent." Great seriousness and gravity should mark every prayer we make.

7. *Aim to enjoy a holy freedom and boldness of access to God.*—By the faith of Christ we may have "boldness and access with confidence." There should be the liberty of the child joined to the humility of the creature. Our great necessity, and the faithful promises, and holy examples of the word of God, invite us to a resolute and determined spirit, that will wrestle and plead with God for the blessing; and, like Jacob, take no denial. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Our most gracious God thus suffers himself to be prevailed on, and is willingly overcome. "None that wait on him shall be ashamed." You should, you may tell him all your desires freely, and fully, without hiding any thing from him. This liberty of access was purchased for us by our Lord. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart." Importunity, or urgent demand and entreaty, *αναιδεια*, an urgency, that will not be repulsed, is recommended by an example which our Lord himself brings before us. Luke xi. 8. Yet beware of presumptuousness, or any thing like irreverence. Observe how Abraham pleads for Sodom; (Gen. xviii. 27. 30—32,) he pleads freely and boldly; yet with what reverence and humility he urges his pleas!

8. *Be sincere and fervent.*—Sincerity in prayer is an unfeigned desire that God would grant our petitions. "It is easy," says the Rev Mr. Adam, "to say the words of a prayer; but to pray hungering and thirsting is the greatest of all works. Acquiescence in the bare act of prayer is a most dangerous delusion, and keeps the soul from its proper relief." We cannot be too much warned against the mere external service to which we are so constantly prone, and which is the bane of all spiritual good. The Scriptures often insist on the provocation which a merely external service offers to God. Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. Our Lord repeatedly reproves the Pharisees, for their formal prayers. Consider, then, the amazing value of those spiritual blessings for which you ask; believe that God, and God alone, can, and he will give them; and this will, by his grace, help you to be both sincere and fervent in your prayers.

Augustine confesses to God, "In the entrance on youth, I had prayed for chastity, and had said, 'Give me chastity and continence, but grant not my request immediately;' for I was afraid lest thou shouldest quickly hear my prayer, and heal this distemper of concupiscence, which I wished rather to be fully gratified than extinguished." Such an example should instruct us. Let us really desire that which we ask. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth." "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." It has been observed, "In our prayers, sincerity is their best art, simplicity their garb, and zeal their gloss." It is evident that the mind should devote itself entirely to the solemn exercise, and dismissing all foreign and outward cares, be as far as possible carried above them. How defective, then, are our prayers! how needful our Saviour's intercession! how all important is the aid of his Spirit! Guard also against that sinful sloth and indifference which is often indulged in, from the vain idea, that, if our intentions be right, any substance or form of prayer

* See Hamilton's Life of Bonnell.

will serve. Offer not to God such imperfect sacrifices. It may assist you in ascertaining your sincerity, often to ask yourself questions on your prayers, as, "did I really desire what I asked?" &c.

And be not merely sincere; aim also at fervency of desire. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." But we too generally get over it as a task: we put not forth our strength to it. Custom turns it into a fruitless formality. Yet all the various expressions by which prayer is described in the Scriptures, point out to us the sincerity and fervency of true devotion.—It is to "call upon the name of the Lord," to "stretch forth the hands to him," to "follow hard after him," to "take hold of God," to "pour out the heart before him," as it were to empty all the desires of the soul—it is, to "give the Lord no rest." It is "striving in prayers." "Always labouring fervently in prayers." Now it is evident that expressions of this kind show that it is not a trifling matter in which we are engaged; they imply the greatest earnestness in spirit. And when we consider how immensely valuable are the blessings which we ask, pardon, peace, holiness, victory over Satan, acceptance in the day of judgment, and eternal life; surely the most vehement and earnest longings and ardent desires are but suitable and becoming. How strong are the expressions of God's dislike of lukewarmness! Rev. iii, 16. The fervour of devotion will be much promoted by constant perseverance in the performance of this duty. "The chariot wheel is warmed by its own motion." But after all, remember the caution, that though where God inclines the heart fervently to pray, he usually bestows the blessing; yet we are not to draw our hopes of success merely from our fervency, but only from the name of Christ.

9. *Be frequent and persevering.*—Appoint the most convenient times, and be constant in keeping to them. Let your hours of prayer be duly regulated and constantly observed. The Apostle exhorts us to the duty of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Undoubtedly our many wants and dangers, and the examples of the Bible, call for daily, regular, constant, and incessant prayer. Undoubtedly also, it requires much patient perseverance, really to maintain the spirit of devotion. Your evil heart, your great spiritual enemy, your old habits, your present ease and indulgence, and perhaps those about you, oppose. But "be not weary in well doing." Grudge not the time you spend in devotion. It is the most truly profitable way of passing time. Perseverance in prayer will carry away the blessing. Consider the example of the woman of Canaan, who thus gained her desire from our Lord. This is written for our encouragement. Consider the case of Moses being obliged to hold up his hands in prayer during the whole battle with Amalek. Do you think it presumptuous? nay, it is most pleasing and acceptable to God. The whole scope of one of our Lord's parables is, to teach us that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." He said, "There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith! And shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" It is every day's practise in earthly things, for men to persevere in their request, and to send in petition after petition till they obtain their wishes. It is the character of true devotion, that it will not desist from seeking till it gain the desired spiritual blessing. Blind Bartimeus persevering notwithstanding all discouragements, at length gains his request. Our Saviour has left us an example of his holy perseverance, when he himself, in the garden of Gethsemane, persevered in repeatedly asking, with the same words, that help which he needed.

We ought, then, to pray with restless importunity and perseverance. The same duty is brought before us in the following parable: "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend; yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. How gracious is that merciful Father, who by these examples teaches us to continue praying; and how inexcusable will it be, if, after such an encouragement, we do not persevere in asking for his blessing!

10. *Be humbled and self-abased.* This spirit should mark all your prayers.—"The foundation of prayer," says Paley, "in all cases, is a sense of want. No man prays in earnest, or to any purpose, for what he does not feel that he wants. Know, then, and feel the weakness of your nature." "The great mistake of prayer," says the Rev. Mr. Adam, "is, not praying as poor and destitute creatures; but thinking that we are and have already in some degree what we pray for." God "forgetteth not the cry of the humble." Even when the wicked king Manassah "humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him," we read that "God was entreated of him." The Saviour himself says, "Not my will but thine be done." If one grace more than another has God's special approbation, and is attended with multiplied spiritual advantages, it is that of humility.* The humble man, being deeply sensible of his own need, the more he receives, the more he feels his indigence; he expects all from mere mercy, and pleads nothing, but his own worthlessness and necessity; and, having a broken and contrite spirit, he waits with patience till God have mercy, thinking the smallest blessing above his deserts. Cultivate, then, a spirit of humility. When we pray for any grace, let us be ready to confess our faultiness in that particular, and acknowledge our utter inability of ourselves to work it in our hearts. Let us remember what an awfully great and holy being He is, and how sinful we are at the best! and how the glorified spirits veil their faces, fall down and worship before God. Many are the advantages of humility; "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart." The tears of the penitent shall avail much with him. When "Hezekiah wept sore," his prayer was heard. It is said of the people of God returning to Zion, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." The showers of heaven run off the high and steep hills, leaving them dry and barren, while the lowly vallies are saturated with refreshing rain, and become fruitful. Go to the throne of grace, not in the spirit of the self-conceited Pharisee, fancying yourselves better than others; but in the humility of the publican, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Bishop Wilkins justly observes, "our most enlarged devotions are nothing worth without the fruit of humble and upright conversation, and with this consequent, our coldest and most restrained prayer may be looked upon as successful." "The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,

* An old writer, commending humility in prayer as advantageous in prosperity as well as affliction, thus illustrates it—"Vessels whose sails are filled, if well ballasted, run a more steady course; so it is with saints, when they pray with full-sailed joy of faith; yet while this holy ballast of humility is in the hold of the heart, and not merely aloft in show above deck, appearing to men, they are not soon lifted up with every good success they meet with, but keep low and deep, and carry it evenly before the Lord, as humbly, if not more humbly, than before. See Cobbett on Prayer, page 283.

whose name is Holy, dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." It is by going in this spirit, relying on the merits, obedience, and intercession of the Saviour, that we shall find acceptance with God. Observe how humble are the prayers of God's servants. See those of Abraham, (Gen. xviii, 27.) Jacob, (Gen. xxviii, 17, 18.) David, (Ps. li.) Job, (ch. xl, 4; xlii, 6.) Isaiah, (ch. vi, 6.) Ezra, (ch. ix, 6.) and even the Lord Jesus Christ, (Heb. v, 7.) We may abase ourselves more than we ought before man, but we cannot be too humble when we come before God; and the nearer access we have unto his glorious majesty, the more humble we shall be. "Let us have grace," then "that we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."*

In conclusion, we are led to remark, that even a cursory view of these rules is calculated to show us how defective, in every one of them, our prayers have been and still are. If we examine our prayers by them, we may learn the reason why we have derived so little benefit from prayer; we may see more of our fallen condition; and be led to apply without delay, for an interest in the only atonement for sin, and for that divine strength which alone can enable us to overcome sin and serve God acceptably.

But be not discouraged by the strictness here recommended, and think that the work of prayer is altogether impracticable, because you cannot discharge it perfectly. Aim high, and you are more likely to attain to a good degree in Christian grace, with that humility which ever marks the Christian character; besides, let us never forget what a fountain of spiritual life, what a powerful, gracious, and glorious Saviour we have; a sun whose rays can warm the coldest heart, and whose beams can enliven the dullest spirit. Let us never forget what a mighty and gracious helper we have in the blessed Spirit who "helpeth our infirmities." You will find, that nothing is impossible to those united to Christ by living faith, and abiding in him, and receiving the daily supply of his Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

An Exhortation to Constant Prayer.

PRAYER being at the root of every other good, marking the commencement of the Christian life, being the pulse by which its strength and vigour may be known, or the hands by which its daily nourishment is obtained and ministered, the reader will bear with me while I attempt still farther to press this duty on the conscience.

There are two things which will ever bring the Christian to the throne of grace:—A sense of his own wants; and a desire to enjoy the presence of God.

God having promised to supply all his wants, his prayers are the importunate wrestling of the soul with God for blessings of infinite moment. And God being the portion of his soul, he finds in his presence the sweet and unspeakable repose of the soul on God, his exceeding great reward.

"Prayer," says Bishop Taylor, "is the effect and the exercise, the beginning and the promoter of all graces. A holy life is a continual prayer. Prayer is the

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* Having given the preceding general rules as principally necessary to be attended to, I sum up in a note what might farther be said, by extracting from an old writer the following Rules of Practice.

I. *Before Prayer.*—Meditate on the promises and presence of God.—Ask his gracious help, and the evidence of his Spirit.—Lay aside all malice, guile, envy, hatred, and seek to have thy heart filled with heavenly love.—Remember thy own vileness, and God's awful majesty.—Disburthen thy mind of worldly thoughts and cares.

II. *In Prayer.*—Lift up thy heart with thy hands, and place before thee Christ and his merits.—Watch over thy thoughts.—Recover thyself from distractions, and improve them to thy further humiliation and watchfulness.

III. *After Prayer.*—Thank the Lord for any degree of liberty or enlargement.—Pray for pardon and the sprinkling blood of atonement.—Wait God's leisure.—Mark answers to prayer when God gives thee greater confidence in his love; more cheerfulness of spirit; grace to persevere in the face of many denials; a spirit of self-examination and circumspection; and when he gives thee thy requests, let it stir thee up to thankfulness, and quicken thee in his way.

peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the rest of our cares, the calm of our tempest."

1. Yet there are many *who have neglected prayer*, and this in all, or at least in some of its branches. Such persons will often be dissatisfied, complaining of others; and though in the midst, perhaps, of abundance of earthly good things, yet would they declare their real state, they would be found discontented and unhappy. And is this to be wondered at? God is your Creator. He is the Governor of the universe. He makes men happy; when he leaves them, they are miserable; and yet you neglect to seek him. You do not pursue his plans. You do not follow the directions which he has given you for obtaining his blessings, and therefore you have them not. But can you think that you will always have an opportunity of seeking him? O no! remember there is an "accepted time, a day of salvation," and that it is our highest duty and our plainest interest, to "seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." But perhaps you defer seeking God to the close of life, or to a period of sickness. O most dangerous delusion! To be careful about the temporal enjoyment of a day, and to suspend eternal happiness on the most improbable of all chances! It is almost certain that if you do from day to day put off the duty of prayer, deceiving yourself with the intention of calling on God in such a period, God will not, in that day, give you either grace or ability to pray to him. You will perish in your sins. There is neither safety nor happiness but in constant prayer. If you would obtain the waters of life, you must come to the fountain. If you would drink of the streams, you must come to the banks of that "river which maketh glad the city of our God." Perhaps you think prayer to be needless or useless. But is not this sad folly? You think it necessary to enquire, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" necessary to seek after the provision of mere temporal wants; and yet you can be careless about the pardon of your sins, the salvation of your soul, the eternal ruin of hell, and the everlasting glory of heaven. Prayer is no more to be esteemed needless, than eternal bliss is needless. No man ever repented of prayer. Baxter says, "I often repent that I have prayed to him so coldly, and communed with him so negligently, and served him so remissly; but I never repent of the time, care, affection, or diligence employed in this holy work.

2. Some are *ashamed of prayer*.—They think that it is the mark of a weak, or superstitious mind. They are afraid of being laughed at and ridiculed by their ungodly companions; and perhaps they have no place to which they can retire to be alone. But is it not the grossest ignorance, weakness, and delusion to be afraid of the ridicule of a perishing, guilty man, and regardless of the displeasure of the ever-living and ever-blessed God? Only be firm, and constant in your devotions, and you will soon put to shame the ridicule of your companions, or God will manifestly appear on your side. Imitate Daniel's noble openness and frankness, his firm decision, and integrity of devotion, (Dan. iv, 35,) and you may expect to be carried through every difficulty. It is not a mark of a weak and little mind, but of the deepest wisdom, of the highest grandeur, and nobleness of spirit, to hold constant intercourse with the Lord of heaven and earth. The true weakness, the real littleness, is to be afraid of a worm, a creature of a day, mere dust and ashes.*

3. There are others *who did once pray with earnestness and fervour, but they have become remiss or careless*.—Some

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*The following fact will show that God's blessing to others may also attend a faithful discharge of our own duty.

A pious man was once led by some common engagement to associate a whole day with a minister who had greatly neglected his sacred duties. Their business took them from home, and they had much conversation together on religious subjects. At night they came to the same inn, and found that they could only have one bed room. The minister was soon undrest and in bed, without saying any prayer. His companion at first hesitated whether he should put out the candle and then pray, or say his prayers openly. He thought that his duty at that time led him not to be ashamed of prayer, and

alarming sermons, some terrors of conscience, some dangerous event, and some conviction of sin, once excited you to seek God: but now, both your fears and your prayers have passed away, or at least you are unsteady and negligent. David describes the case, Ps. lxxviii, 34—37. How precious once were the hours of prayer! How delightful a place was your closet! How tears filled your eyes while you confessed your sinfulness, or thanked God for his mercies! But now, all is cold and dull. Surely your own conscience will most powerfully condemn you, and plead with me when I exhort you to renewed efforts to obtain the spirit of grace and supplication. "Prayer," says Cooke, "is compared to incense; and if the smoke of it ceases to rise up before God, it is a sure sign that the light of divine knowledge and the fire of divine love are both extinguished in the heart." The exhortation belongs to you—"O Israel return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Are the realities of a dying bed and the judgment day less near, or less important than they once were? Nay, every day is bringing you nearer and nearer to them. Every day is of more importance, and shortens that little span of life, in which we have to escape the misery of hell, and gain the heavenly mansions. Lose not a moment—plead earnestly for the renewed spirit of prayer. Think not that your sin is beyond forgiveness, and therefore now prayer is of no use. Let not Satan so tempt you. Again seek the presence of God, and it will be a proof that you are not yet given up to a reprobate mind. Even in the wicked city of Nineveh, when they cried mightily unto the Lord, they were spared. Now if God heard the Ninevites crying for temporal blessings, doubt not but he will hear you, when you earnestly implore pardon, peace, and salvation. Yet there is a way open to the throne of grace; and so long as it is open, you need not be miserable, you need not be unhelped.

4. Others are *endeavouring to live in constant prayer.*—They need no proof of the obligation no additional argument, to show them that it is their duty. But perhaps they are often discouraged and cast down by their difficulties in attaining a constant spirit of devotion. If, however, you are desiring and seeking, Augustine says, "If he seeks, let him not doubt but that the desire of seeking has been received from him whom he seeks." And may I not say, when you really attain a good measure of the spirit of devotion, you enjoy a peace of God which passeth all understanding; it is your privilege—your happiness. You have free communication with the Lord of lords and King of kings.—You are permitted to come nearer to him on all occasions. He grants all your requests, and supplies all your wants. On account of our corrupt nature, it requires indeed watchfulness, patience, and perseverance, to maintain this spirit of prayer, but you find it to be its own reward. Let us not then be content with small measures of the grace of supplication; let us seek to attain more and more of this gift: and soon the work of prayer ended, the never-ceasing song of praise will commence, which will endure through the boundless ages of eternity.

But let me speak to every reader.

Christian Ministers! We should be men of prayer; it is the half of our duty, and that by which we carry on the rest. "We will," say the Apostles, "give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." The prayers of ministers avail much. We may expect more assistance than others. It is the divine direction for our people—"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him." When Abimelech was threatened with death, he was told to send for Abraham; and the reason given was, "for he

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he prayed, extinguished the light, and went to bed. This faithful discharge of duty was not lost on him who had gone prayerless to bed. The conversation which he had heard, and the example which he had seen, left a deep and abiding impression on his mind, and from that time he became a faithful and laborious minister of Christ.

is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." Should not we then abound in prayer?

Christian Parents! We next address you. Pray for your children. "Whenever," says Bishop Hopkins, "thou comest unto the throne of grace, bring these thy dear pledges upon thy heart with thee. Earnestly implore of God that he would own them, and provide for them as his own children; that he would adopt them into the family of heaven, make them heirs of glory, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ: that he would give them a convenient portion of good things for this life, that they may serve him with more cheerfulness and alacrity; and a large portion of spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus; and at length bring them to the heavenly inheritance. And know assuredly that the prayers of parents are very effectual, and have a kind of authority in them to obtain what they sue for. This is the blessing which holy fathers in Scripture have bestowed on their children. Thus Abraham asked, "O that Ishmael might live before thee." Thus Jacob prayed for and blessed his children and his grand-children. Thus Job remembered his children, and "offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all." Bring them up, also, in the practise of prayer. They cannot too early begin to seek their Saviour and to lisp his praise. No habit will be more profitable to them than that of daily prayer. Teach your children this, and they will then rise up and call you blessed. Store their young minds with the Scriptures, furnish them with short portions for all occasions. This will arm them with invincible strength against their enemies. They are about to journey through a dangerous wilderness; teach them to pray, morning and evening, and it will direct their way, "like that pillar which guided Israel through the wilderness, as a cloud by day to shadow them, and as a fire by night to comfort them."

Prayer is a duty at all times and in all seasons of life.

Are you in prosperity? Let prayer and praise sanctify all your enjoyments. Great is the snare of outward prosperity. How "hardly shall they that are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven." You have need to pray much, lest that which was designed as a talent for great usefulness, occasion your eternal ruin. Let nothing hinder you from giving regular and full time to devotion. The days of health and strength should be given to God, "while the evil days come not nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Are you *afflicted?* That is the time for special prayer. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me." In the absence of the sun, the mild and peaceful radiance of the moon illumines our path. Let devotion spread a cheering light over your darker hours. "The Queen of night," says Bowdler, "unveils its full beauty when the hours of joy and lustre have passed away, pouring as it were a holy light through the damps and darkness of adversity." Thus will constant prayer cheer the darkest season of affliction.

Are you *young?* Let that rapid torrent of youthful strength and vivacity, which, if left to itself, would only be wasted and dashed against rocks, from precipice to precipice, be turned into a profitable course. Let this stream be brought into the channel of devotion, and it will move the machine of the Christian life, and communicate innumerable blessings to man. "Those that seek me early shall find me." Nothing is more pleasing, nothing more profitable, than early devotion. Slight not him in your strength, who will be the only protector of your weakness.

Are you in *middle life?* In the midst of this world's engagements, how are you encompassed as in a maze of temptation! Let prayer be the secret thread which leads you safely out of this labyrinth. How are you surrounded with duties of the first importance! What a happy influence, then, would devotion have in making you a general blessing to your family, your neighbourhood, and your country! Like the regulator in the watch, though unseen outwardly, it would keep the spring of your actions in

order; it would make all your movements certain and useful. Give the strength of your years to God, and you will leave "a good name better than precious ointment." Remember, "the prayer of faith," as Bishop Porteus says, "moves the hands of him that moveth all things."

Are you in *declining years?* and will you not hold converse with Him whom you are soon to meet and see face to face? Why should you enter the eternal world a stranger to the great King who rules there, when you have an opportunity of being adopted into his family, enjoying his presence here, and sharing the splendours of his crown and of his glories hereafter. "What," says one, "can be more truly desirable than to attain to a measure of that light and peace, which, in their full measure, belong to a higher condition? and what more excellent than that occupation which connects the service with the enjoyment of God, the duties of this life with the glories of the better?"

To every class of my readers I say,

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

HYMNS ON PRAYER.

I.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Utter'd or unexpress'd;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye.
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech,
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach,
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And say, "Behold, he prays!"

The saints in prayer, appear as one,
In word, in deed, and mind,
When, with the Father and the Son,
Their fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made on earth alone;
The Holy Spirit pleads;
And Jesus, on th' eternal throne,
For sinners intercedes.

O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of Prayer Thyself hast trod,
Lord, teach us how to pray.

MONTGOMERY.

II.

Though "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord!"
Seraph to seraph sings;
And angel choirs, with one accord,
Worship with veiling wings:

Though Earth thy footstool, Heaven thy throne,
Thy way amid the sea,
Thy paths deep floods, thy steps unknown,
Thy counsels mystery:

Yet wilt thou look on him who lies
A suppliant at his feet;
And hearken to the feeblest cries,
That reach thy mercy seat.

Between the cherubim, of old,
Thy glory was express'd;
But God, in Christ, we now behold,
In flesh made manifest.

Through him, who all our sickness felt,
Who all our sorrows bears;
Through him, in whom thy fulness dwelt,
We offer up our prayers.

Touch'd with a feeling of our woes,
Jesus our High Priest stands;
All our infirmities he knows,
Our souls are in his hands.

He bears them up with strength divine,
When at thy feet we fall;
Lord! cause thy face on us to shine;
Hear us; on Thee we call.

MONTGOMERY.

III.

Lord! teach us how to pray aright,
With rev'rence and with fear;
Though dust and ashes in thy sight,
We may, we must, draw near.

We perish, if we cease from prayer;
O grant us power to pray:
And when to meet thee we prepare,
Lord, meet us by the way.

Give deep humility; the sense
Of godly sorrow give;
A strong desiring confidence
To hear thy voice, and live;

Faith in the only Sacrifice
That can for sin atone;
To cast our hopes, to fix our eyes,
On Christ, on Christ alone;

Patience to watch, and wait, and weep,
Though mercy long delay;
Courage our fainting souls to keep,
And trust thee, though thou slay:

Give these;—and then thy will be done;
Thus strengthen'd with all might,
We, by the Spirit, through thy Son,
Shall pray, and pray aright.

MONTGOMERY.

IV.

Lord! when we bend before thy throne,
And our confessions pour,
Teach us to feel the sins we own,
And hate what we deplore.

Our broken spirit pitying see;
True penitence impart:
Then let a kindling glance from thee
Beam hope on every heart.

When we disclose our wants in prayer,
May we our wills resign;
And not a thought our bosom share,
That is not wholly thine.

May faith each weak petition fill,
And raise it to the skies,
And teach our heart 'tis Goodness still
That grants it, or denies.

CHAPTER XV.

Forms of prayer.

The writer's design has been to induce his readers, generally, to pray in private and in the family, without forms. Yet as this work may fall into the hands of many, to whom this, from various causes, would not immediately be practicable, he adds a few Forms of Prayer.

He has, in two or three instances, put the names of the parts of prayer to the forms, as a means of assisting those who may use them to learn the divisions of prayer.

In the part of Confession in the different prayers, the writer has mentioned those sins which are most common. The person who uses the form may easily alter it according to circumstances.

These forms must rather be considered as hints to be improved on than examples to copy. Much of the interest of private and family prayer depends on personal and local circumstances. Let us endeavour to attain that spirit of grace and supplication which enables the Christian, in a strain of holy devotion, to bring the changing circumstances and events of life before the throne of grace, comforts his own heart in private prayer, and edifies and interests all about him in family worship.

PRAYER FOR THE GIFT AND GRACE OF PRAYER.

O thou eternal and ever-blessed God, who art the Author and Giver of every good gift, and who hast promised so many and such great blessings to them that call upon thee, hear me now, I beseech thee, through Jesus Christ.

Lord, I confess my utter inability to seek thee aright. I am encompassed with infirmities; I acknowledge my indisposition to prayer; I bewail my backwardness and reluctance to hold converse with God.

Teach me rightly to feel this my weakness and helplessness. Give me a more complete knowledge of my insufficiency. Convince me of the need that I have of thy divine assistance, and grant me earnest desires after thy salvation. Create in me an hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Impart to me a holy liberty of soul in calling upon thee. Heavenly Father, Fountain of light and life, I do not ask for earthly riches, vain pleasures, human honours; but I do humbly ask for the spirit of prayer, for the heart ever prepared and ready to call upon God.

It is thy promise that thou wilt give the Holy Spirit to them that ask. I ask, do thou give; I seek, grant that I may find; I knock, let it be opened unto me. Help me to pray in the Holy Ghost. Help me to live daily in constant believing prayer. Lord, teach me to pray.

By nature proud and self-sufficient, I am prone to think and act as if I needed not thy help; but O teach me to know how poor and how needy I really am; and knowing my great and many necessities, and my entire dependence on thee, give me the disposition, from day to day, and from hour to hour, to seek thy help and strength.

Enable me entirely to confide in thy almighty power, thy boundless compassion, thy infinite love, and thy amazing mercy. Let the gift of thy Son Jesus Christ, and his intercession for sinners, encourage me to approach thee. Help me to pray, relying only on his merits, and through him may I learn to come boldly to the throne of grace.

Let nothing keep me from God. May I renounce all known sin, and all carnal indulgencies, and not be conformed to this world. Enable me to resist the temptations of Satan, to watch against self-righteousness and spiritual pride, and never to neglect the study of thy word.

Give me grace, whenever I seek thee, to look for the aid of the Holy Spirit, to trust only in the name of thy Son, and to watch unto prayer. Let me not be rash with my mouth; but, meditating before I pray, may I ask in faith, in simplicity of mind, with filial freedom of spirit, in sincerity of heart, and fervency of desire, praying always with all prayer, and watching thereunto with all perseverance. And, after having done all, may I ever consider myself an unprofitable servant.

Grant me thy Holy Spirit to help my infirmities, for I know not what to pray for as I ought; grant me thy Holy Spirit to make intercession for me with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Give me, O give me this great gift, the spirit of grace and supplication, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRIVATE MORNING PRAYER.

Merciful God, give ear unto me, when I cry to thee, in the name of Jesus Christ. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. Lord, help me to pray.

Confession.

Great is the need that I have to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. The things of the world, the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are continually tempting me, and leading me astray from thee. My affections towards thee, my God, are cold and dull. My tempers are often unsanctified. I am prone to depart from thee, and lukewarm and indifferent when I ought to have a holy zeal. I too much neglect and trifle with my own salvation, and the salvation of my relatives and friends. I have little of that spiritual mind which is life and peace. My temptations are many, I often yield to them; I have no strength of my own to resist them.

Petition.

I beseech thee, therefore, O my God, to be very merciful to me a sinner. Incline and enable me to come to Jesus Christ, weary and heavy laden as I am, and may I find rest in him. Teach me my own guilt and ruin; and help me to rely on his blood, and build all my hopes on his righteousness. God grant that, being grafted in Christ, I may live to him. Suffer me not to deceive myself by a mere form and profession of religion; but give me true faith that I may really abide in Christ and bear much fruit. Quicken thou my soul. Make my heart pure, humble, and devout; and my conversation holy and heavenly. Thou art my Rock, and in thee do I trust. Thou art my strength, O establish me. Help me to live near to thee all the day long; and do thou preserve me from that sin which does so easily beset me.

Give me grace this day to overcome temptation, and to mortify all my corrupt affections. Grant unto me the abundance of thy Holy Spirit. Lord, I deserve not the blessing: I have forfeited the mercy: but, O thou with whom is the residue of the Spirit, for the glory of thy name, and according to thy faithful promise, give me thy Spirit, that I may never dishonour thee by inconsistency and unfruitfulness, but abound in every good work, and walk worthy of the gospel of Christ. Enable me to begin anew this day, in seriousness, and in entire dedication of heart to give myself to thee.

Lord, help me this day to live in prayer, to watch against the peculiar temptations of my station, to embrace every opportunity of doing good, to redeem the time, and to make steady advances in that narrow way which leadeth to eternal life.

Thanksgiving.

And while I pray to thee for those mercies which I need, I would, from the heart, thank thee for all those great blessings which I have received, and do from day to day enjoy. The benefit of quiet

repose, the renewal of my strength, the light which I enjoy, and the better light of life; these, and all the mercies which surround me on awaking, call for my unfeigned thanksgiving, and I do praise and bless thee for them. Blessed be thou for redeeming mercy. Blessed be thou that Jesus died for sinners, even for me. Thanks be unto thee, that grace, pardon, peace, strength, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, are given to sinners, through faith in Christ. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us to be kings and priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Intercession.

O Lord God, let the bright glory and happy dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ spread through the world. Increase both the number and the zeal of those seeking the good of Sion, and the enlargement of thy Son's kingdom. Grant thy blessing to every effort to make the unsearchable riches of Christ known to the Gentiles. Give unto thy people Israel the new heart and the new spirit. Bless our favoured country, so that it may be a highly-honoured instrument in diffusing the light of truth abroad; and grant that every exertion for that end may be a means of reviving true religion in all our hearts at home. Bless all in authority. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and thy people sing for joy. May peace and mercy be granted to all my relatives, and rest on my own soul, and in my own family. May we and all thy people be united in one heart and mind in thy service and love, praying for each other, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ. Hear me, for his name's sake. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER PRIVATE MORNING PRAYER.

Almighty and heavenly Father, who art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways; I come to thee in the name of thy beloved Son, and in obedience to his directions, to enter my closet, and shut to my door, and pray to my Father which is in secret.

Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I laid me down, and slept; I awaked, for thou, Lord, sustained me. For restored light, for life, and health, and strength, I praise and bless thee. Thou, Lord, only, keepest me in safety, and free from evil. Thou providest for all my wants. May my soul, and all that is within me, magnify God for all his goodness, and especially for his wonderful mercy in redeeming sinners by Jesus Christ; for the light of that Sun of Righteousness, which arises with healing in his wings on benighted souls; for all the blessings of free salvation through him, all the means of grace, and the hope of future glory.

Sad are the returns which I have made for so many mercies. How ungrateful have I been! I acknowledge and bewail my manifold sins and rebellions. I was born in sin, and a child of wrath, and I find continually the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that I cannot do the things that I would. I am guilty, sinful, and weak. Lord, save me, or I perish. I entirely depend on thy mercy, in Christ Jesus, for the gift and continuance of every good, and for deliverance from all those evils which I have justly deserved.

For that mercy I now earnestly look to thee, O Father of mercies. Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. May the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teach me, and all men, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Enable me now, and ever hereafter, to seek the glory of thy holy name, by fulfilling every duty of my station conscientiously and diligently.

Give me grace to be continually looking to thee, through this day, for direction, assistance, and strength. Be thou in all my thoughts, and let me acknowledge thee in all my ways.

Give me the same mind that was in

Christ Jesus, that I may be humble, patient, gentle, and full of love, even as he was. Teach me to be poor in spirit, and meek; to mourn for sin, and to hunger and thirst after righteousness; and thus shall I obtain the blessings of the kingdom of Christ. Grant that I may love that Saviour whom I have not seen, and believing in him may I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And here constrained by thy mercies, I would afresh present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto thee, which is my reasonable service. I renew in thy presence all the solemn vows made in Baptism and at thy Table, renouncing the world, the flesh, and the Devil! and steadfastly purposing, by thy help, to keep thy holy will and commandments, and walk in the same this and every day of my life. I take thee, O God, for my portion, and thy laws as my rule, and thy service as my duty, entreating thee to give me grace that I may be wholly thine.

And O that all mankind knew and served thee. Grant that the kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, may be established in every land, in every heart. Fulfill thy gracious promises. Send thy Gospel to the Gentiles, and let them be turned from darkness to light. Let the kingdoms of this world speedily become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ, that he may reign for ever.

Grant the abundance of thy Holy Spirit to the ministers of Christ every where, and especially to him who watches over my soul. Bless the place and the neighbourhood in which I live, and prosper every effort to do good.

Lord, I beseech thee also, to bless my more immediate relations. Regard with thy favour my parents, my brothers and sisters, my benefactors and friends, my connections and acquaintance. Look upon them in mercy, and visit them with thy salvation. Hear these prayers, for the only sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

PRIVATE PRAYER AT NOON.

O Lord God Almighty, my God, my refuge, and my strength, incline my heart to seek thee in the name of Jesus Christ, and hear my prayer for his sake.

It is one of my highest privileges, and of my greatest mercies, that thine ear is ever open to the prayer of those that call upon thee. Give me, then, thy Spirit, that I may at all times call upon the name of the Lord. At evening, at morning, and at noon-day, will I pray, and thou shalt hear my voice.

I am, indeed, a sinful and a needy creature. My wants are many, and my necessities are urgent. My faith is weak, my repentance imperfect, my affections are wandering; my heart is hard, my pride is great, and my sins are innumerable. I fail continually both in love to thee and love to my neighbour, and am verily guilty and deeply polluted in thy sight.

Yet still, O Lord, though I have sinned, I have an advocate with thee, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. O grant me faith in him, that I may be justified freely by thy grace, through his redemption; be accepted in that beloved Son; and be a partaker of his Spirit.

Lord, make me hate and loathe every iniquity. Strengthen me to resist every temptation. Give me grace to put my whole trust in thee, to love thee supremely and constantly, to honour thy holy name, and to serve thee truly all the days of my life. Teach me to do thy will, O my God, and let thy good Spirit lead me into the land of uprightness. Give me grace to love my neighbour as myself, to reverence my superiors, to hurt no one, to be temperate and chaste. Let me not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Lord, hast thou not said, when the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them? O Lord, I am poor and needy, and my soul thirsteth for thee. Hear me; let me drink of

the waters of life—never leave me, nor forsake me. Let me find thee, and live in thy presence, where alone is fulness of joy.

Grant, Lord of all power and love, that thy glory may be revealed to the heathen, and that all flesh may see it together. Lift up the light of thy countenance upon thy people. Build up the waste places of Sion. Send labourers into thy vineyard.

Bless all in authority, the Ministers of thy Gospel, and all the people. Impart thy mercy and grace to my dear relations, to all who pray for me, and all for whom I ought to pray. Be gracious to those in distress. Grant to mine enemies, if I have any, thy pardoning mercy and sanctifying Spirit, and reward sevenfold into their bosom those from whom I have received benefits and kindness.

Lord God of my salvation, every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy. Thou keepest me from day to day in safety, and hast blessed me with innumerable mercies.

I thank thee for every prayer heard and answered, and for every good received. But thou hast commended thy love above all, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. He shed his blood for me; and how can I love, and praise, and serve thee as I ought! O help me to live in all things to thy glory, for the only sake of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

[As some may be desirous to give the whole time of mid-day prayer to intercession, the following intercessory prayer is added.]

INTERCESSORY PRAYER AT NOON.

Almighty Father who would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, permit me now to approach thee, through Jesus Christ, in behalf of all those for whom I ought to pray.

Lord, bless thy Church throughout the world. Let the glory of the Lord rise upon it in every place. I humbly pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Grant that they that believe in him may stand fast, in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and send them now prosperity.

Bless that particular branch of thy church to which I belong. May it continue to be favoured with the advantages which it now enjoys. God of all grace, grant that thy ministering servants in all the earth may be dead to the world and alive to Christ, and faithfully and continually preach the doctrines of his salvation. If any preach themselves, and not the Lord Jesus Christ, O God, change thou their hearts, show them their danger, teach them thy truth, and enable them to proclaim it to others. Give wisdom, grace, and every blessing, to that minister from whom I hear thy word.

And I pray thee, great Lord of the harvest, who seest and knowest all men, and hast the hearts of all in thy control, bless all Universities, Seminaries, and Schools, that in them, the young may be trained up in the fear of God and the faith of Christ. Give thy Holy Spirit to all preparing for the ministry. Send forth into thy vineyard, both in our own country and in every land, men of an enlightened mind and a devout heart, men of patient perseverance, of firm resolution, of entire dedication of body and soul to their work, of a wise and sober judgment, and of unquenchable love to immortal souls.

Give thy blessing to all in authority, that they may use the means which thou hast given them in the spread of true religion. Lord, instruct our Magistrates, and teach our Senators wisdom, that judgment may run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Grant that every where such men as Nehemiah and Daniel may be raised up to offices in the state—men who shall disinterestedly labour and pray for the advancement of righteousness, and truth, and peace.

Our national sins call indeed for judgment; but grant that mercy may rejoice over judgment, and grace abound over sin. Give us, I beseech thee, those tem-

poral and spiritual blessings which we deserve not, for to thee belongeth mercies and forgiveness of sins.

Grant that the doctrine of Christ crucified may be every where preached. Let such as now are Christians in name only, being taught the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, seek the life and power of religion; may the Jews, hearing of Christ Jesus, look unto him whom they have pierced, and mourn; and may the Gentiles be given to him. So let the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

May such an effusion of thy Spirit be shed on all flesh, that every tongue may joyfully sing the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men."

Bestow thy grace abundantly on my brethren and kinsmen, according to the flesh, my parents, brothers, and sisters, and all my relatives, my servants, my Christian friends, neighbours, and connections. If any hate or revile me, Lord, teach me to bless them—if any despitefully use me or persecute me, I now pray to thee in their behalf. Father, forgive them, and do them good.

Look on the destitute and afflicted; let their afflictions lead them to thee, that they may find God their refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble; and though the chastening be grievous, may they experience that it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Finally, O Lord God, quicken all those that are dead in trespasses and sins; grant that those beginning to know the truth may follow on to know the Lord, those that are weak in faith may wax strong, those that have backslidden may be healed, those that are strong may be confirmed more and more, and go from strength to strength till they appear in Sion. Thanks be to thee for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear. Shortly accomplish the number of thine elect, and hasten thy kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and Saviour. Amen.*

* Some have found it advantageous to give particular days for particular parts of intercession, as follows:—Sunday, Ministers and Christian Congregations.—Monday, Family.—Tuesday, relations, friends, and enemies.—Wednesday, our Country.—Thursday, Benevolent and Religious Societies.—Friday, The Church throughout the world.—Saturday, Jews, Gentiles, and unconverted persons.

PRIVATE EVENING PRAYER.

Gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, great in power, and rich in mercy to all them that call upon thee, help me now so, in the name of Christ, to ask, that I may have; and so to seek that I may find.

Enter not into judgment with me, O Lord, for in thy sight I cannot be justified. However unblameable I may appear before men, before Him who knows the heart, I confess and would mourn over innumerable sins in the past day, and in every day of my life.

I acknowledge with shame and sorrow my hypocrisy and pride, my vanity and selfishness, my unbelief and impatience, my self-indulgence and self-righteousness, my obstinacy and self-will, my disregard of thy law and thy glory, my living to myself and not to thee. And, O how hard is my heart, that feels so little the guilt and the evil of so many and such great sins!

Lord of all power and might, soften and break this hard heart. Give me a contrite spirit. There is mercy with thee. There is forgiveness with thee. O may thy great mercy be displayed towards me, in pardoning all my sins, and in renewing my soul. Give me penitence, faith, and self-denial. Bestow on me the graces of sincerity, humility, and love.

May the love of Christ be more known and felt by me, and let it constrain me to live not to myself, but to him that died for me. Grant me thy Holy Spirit, teaching those things of which I am ignorant, taking of the things of Christ to show them unto me, and daily sanctifying my heart.

I ask for heavenly wisdom, holy simplicity, ardent zeal, and purity of heart. Incline me to study to be quiet, and to do my own business, and to work with my own hands. Prepare me, day by day, more and more, for the coming of

our Lord Jesus Christ. Make me meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I commend myself to thy care during the night. May I lay down at peace with thee, through Christ, and in peace with all the world.

O Lord, though I be unworthy through my manifold transgressions to approach thee at all, yet thou hast commanded that intercessions be made for all men; hear me, therefore, unworthy though I be, in behalf of all that need my prayers. May the Lord comfort his people, and have mercy upon his afflicted. Let all nations whom thou hast made, come and worship before thee and glorify thy name. Let every obstacle which may hinder the progress of thy truth be removed in mercy. Bless all the members of the Church of Christ, and all his ministers, and especially those with whom I am more intimately connected.

Give to my parents, my brothers, my sisters, and my relatives, all those temporal and spiritual blessings of which they stand in need. Bless my superiors, my companions, and all about me. Continue the blessings of peace to my country. Pardon any who may have injured me; and if I have injured any, may I be ready to confess my fault, and to make restitution for any wrong done, and may they be disposed to forgive me.

I would not, O thou gracious giver of every good, close my evening prayer, without offering up, through Christ Jesus, my sincerest thanksgiving for all the mercies of the past day. For any help vouchsafed in my duties; for any stand which I may have been enabled to make against sin, Satan, and the world: for any measure of light, knowledge, or grace, given unto me, all praise, all glory be to thee. If I am still kept in thy way, and yet spared from that ruin which I have deserved, while I live, let me praise and bless thee.

How great is the sum of thy mercies! When I look back on thy past blessings, when I read thy promises relating to that which is to come, and when I look around me on every side, and especially when I regard that cross on which thy Son died for sinners, I would say from the heart, My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever. Amen and Amen.

Hear me for the only sake of Jesus Christ.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER PRIVATE EVENING PRAYER.

Amighty God, Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, according to thy gracious promise, give me thy Holy Spirit, to help my infirmities, and enable me, in the name, and through the mediation of thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, to call upon thee.

Great is thy goodness to us sinners, in that we, who have grievously offended thee, have such a mediator, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. Without a Saviour I can have no hope; for I have sinned against thee, and done evil in thy sight day by day.

I confess and mourn before thee the manifold sins of the past day.* I daily offend thee by pride, impenitence, hardness of heart, unbelief, and forgetfulness of thee, and in many other ways: leaving undone the things which I ought to have done, and doing those which I ought not.

Lord, let thy Holy Spirit convince me of my sinfulness. I pray that I may see more of the extent of my iniquities, and feel more of their guilt. Thus may I be led to hate sin, and to feel the need and value of that Saviour who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Grant that I may be a partaker of His great salvation. Whatever else I lose, may I win Christ, and be found in him.

Lord, I am unclean; if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. I believe that thou art able, I believe that thou art willing. Lord, help my unbelief; Lord, make me clean.

Give me, I beseech thee, such a sense of thy mercy in free forgiveness, through the blood of Christ, that I may be constrained to present my body a living sacrifice unto thee. Enable me daily to crucify the lusts of the flesh. Give me such a measure of thy grace, that all the

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* Here state those sins of which your conscience accuses you.

powers of my mind, all the affections of my heart, all the members of my body, and all the talents entrusted to me, may be unreservedly engaged for thee. Lord, incline me to spend myself and be spent for thee: strengthen my desire to do so, and enable me ever hereafter to bring this desire to good effect.

Let the number of thy willing and devoted servants be every where increased. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth. Pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, that all the ends of the earth may remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations may worship before thee. Let thy great name, now so little known, and so much profaned, be magnified and sanctified in every country and by every tongue.

Bless the land in which I dwell: its government, the ministers of Jesus Christ, and all its people. May we be a people fearing God and working righteousness. Look with thine especial favour on my relatives and friends, my family connections and acquaintance. May they all be partakers of the grace of Christ here, and of his glory hereafter.

I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth. O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. How great and how numerous they are!

Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits. All the temporal mercies granted so abundantly to me, my food, my clothing, my home, my friends, the daily provisions for my various necessities, these are from thee, who openest thy hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness. But, above all, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

These prayers and praises I offer up in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of perishing sinners: trusting only in his mediation and merits. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

PRAYER BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

O Thou, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, I approach thee as my God and my Father, through thy Son, our Saviour and Intercessor.

Invited to partake of the memorial of his dying love, and to join thy people in remembering him, I come to thee for the gift of all dispositions suitable to a service so solemn and so affecting.

Deliver me, I beseech thee, from all careless, vain, and trifling thoughts; let me lay aside the world and its vanities; let me renounce all self-righteousness and superstitions, and come as a humble penitent, expecting to discover fresh views of my Saviour's glory and goodness, and to receive from him fresh strength to glorify his name.

O Lord, thou hast warned me against eating this bread, and drinking this cup unworthily. God of mercy preserve me from so great a sin. Thou hast directed, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;" I beseech thee, incline and enable me to examine myself, to enquire into my motives in coming, to look back on my life, and to compare my thoughts, words, and works, with thy holy law.

If I have wronged others, Lord, dispose and assist me to make reparation. Wherein I have offended thee, give me that godly sorrow that works repentance unto salvation. Let thy Holy Spirit convince me of my fallen and guilty state before thee. Take away the heart of stone, and give me the heart of flesh—the broken and contrite spirit. And O grant unto me full purpose of heart to forsake every sin, whatever it may cost me; however habitual it may become. Search thou me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me into the way everlasting.

Let the conviction of my exceeding sinfulness, lead me cordially and gratefully to accept my Saviour's gracious invi-

tations, and come weary and heavy laden unto him. May I go to thy table mourning for sin, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, believing in Christ as my only hope and refuge, grateful for all thy mercies, and with a heart full of love to thee and all mankind.

Lord, I implore thy special grace at this solemn ordinance. In the breaking of bread, help me, by a living faith, to view Christ's body broken for me; and in the pouring out of the wine, his blood shed for me. May I thus learn to feel more of the evil of sin, and more of the love of Christ. Help me wisely, believingly, and gratefully to discern the Lord's body; and may it be as living food to my soul, so that now resting on the atonement of Christ, my Lord, I may rejoice and be glad in his great salvation. May he thus be evidently set forth crucified before me, and may I enjoy the communion of his body and his blood.

Gracious Lord, I beseech thee, enable me, when I receive the bread, by a lively faith to realize the blessed truth, that Christ died for sinners, even for me; and when I drink the wine, to believe according to his own word, that his blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. May I then afresh give myself wholly to thee, to be entirely thine, in life, in death, and through eternity; renewing all my solemn vows of obedience, and receiving fresh strength to carry them into effect.

Grant also unto all that shall meet with me around thy table the same blessings. Let our hearts be drawn near to each other. Give us to enter into the privilege of the communion of saints; and may we know that, though many, we are one body, and all partakers of that one bread, the living and true bread that came down from heaven.

O Lord, may we and all thy people thus assembling in thine earthly courts, be made more and more meet for thy heavenly mansions, and at length come to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; may we meet again there, where faith shall be lost in sight, and hope in full enjoyment, and love for ever fill all our souls, through Jesus Christ, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Help me, holy Lord, coming now to thee in secret, gratefully to pour out my soul before thee.

O thou who dwellest in the high and holy place, whose name is holy, I feel that I infinitely need pardon for the sins of my holiest services. If thou, Lord, be extreme to mark what has been amiss, I cannot stand before thee; I have cause to mourn the wanderings of my heart, the dulness of my affections, the weakness of my faith, and the slightness of my repentance, even at thy table, with all the solemnities of the memorials of my Saviour's death around me, and amid the assembly of thy saints.

But while I mourn my own sinfulness, yet still help me to magnify thy wonderful grace. Blessed be thou who put it into my heart to assemble with thy people.

Great is the privilege thus to meet among them here below, to participate in their prayers, and to join in their praises.—Thanks be unto thee for that manifestation of thy love which this ordinance brought before me. O how consoling the truth to such a sinner as I am, that Jesus died for the ungodly, that he receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

Giver of all grace, if I enjoyed any feelings of love to thee, any desires after thy salvation, any thing of communion with thee, if my hope were at all enlivened, my faith at all strengthened, my heart at all enlarged, all praise and glory be to thee. I would not deny thy answers to my prayer; I would not refuse to acknowledge the work of thy Spirit on my soul; but rather, in this thy goodness, find fresh motives to love and to serve thee. Forgive me all that was wrong. Accept, through the mediation of Jesus, all that thy grace enabled me to do according to thy will.

Teach me to feel that I am under fresh obligations to all holy obedience. May the solid and delightful joys of peace with God, the pardon of sins, free justification, and the hope of glory, make the sinful pleasures of the world forever in-

sipid and vain. Having seen and tasted how good the Lord is, may I never turn back again to folly.

O Lord, now is it I need thy strength. Now grant me thy Holy Spirit, continually to bring to my remembrance the solemn transactions of this day. May the recollection of them long remain, filling me with a holy fear of offending thee, an ardent love to my Saviour, and influencing me to devote my body, soul, and substance, all I am, and all I have, wholly to thee.

Lord, now grant that my evil tempers may at length be subdued; that the flesh with its affections and lusts may, through thy Spirit, at length be mortified; that Christ may now dwell in my heart by faith; and that, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, I may fulfill in my life all the solemn vows and resolutions that have been afresh renewed this day in thy presence.

Yes, gracious God, let me never cease striving to serve thee; let me never, while the world tempts, and sin dwells in me, and Satan opposes, give over the contest; let me never rest short of thy great salvation. O thou good Shepherd, who laid down thy life for thy sheep, let me never perish, neither let any pluck me out of thy hand; till at length, with all thine elect, I come to occupy thy fold above.

Hear me, gracious Father; hear and answer, for Christ's sake. Amen.

MORNING FAMILY PRAYER.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, who hast said that thou wilt be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be thy people; dispose our hearts, by the gracious influence of thy Holy Spirit, to worship thee through one Mediator, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Adoration.

[*Thou art God, and there is none beside thee; the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of glory, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions, and sins, and that will by no means clear the guilty. We bow and worship at thy footstool; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.]

Thanksgiving.

Accept, through thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, our unfeigned thanksgivings for the mercies of another day. Thou gavest us our being, and thou preservest us from day to day. Through the defenceless hours of the night thou hast kept us in safety. Thou hast given us a soul capable of knowing and rejoicing in thee, and a body by which we may serve thee.

[We bless thee for the seeing eye, and the hearing ear, for the free use of our limbs and our senses, for the power of the mind, and the affections of the heart.]

But, O Lord, we thank thee most of all for thy spiritual blessings. We bless thee that we were not born in heathen lands, but in this favoured country, where the light of thy truth clearly shines. We thank thee for the comfort of the Holy Scriptures, for the labours of faithful ministers, and for all the means of grace. O how great has been thy love to us! Thou sparedst not thine own Son, but deliveredst him up for us all, and with whom thou hast freely given us all things.

[We are invited to come to thee; though we be guilty and sinful, we are freely offered pardon, peace, and salvation; and thou givest us a hope full of immortality in Christ Jesus our Saviour.]

Dedication.

[What reward shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits? We desire now afresh to devote ourselves to thy service. We give up ourselves, our whole selves unto thee. God of peace, sanctify us wholly. God of our life, grant that our whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.]

* The parts in brackets can be left out, if it is wished to shorten the prayers.

Confession.

But with shame and confusion of face, we would confess that we have been rebellious and disobedient. Thou art holy, but we are unholy. Thou art merciful, but we have often been selfish and unkind. Thou art pure but we are impure. Thou art patient, but we are impatient. We have abused all thy gifts, and made them occasions of sin. Lord, we acknowledge our impenitence, we confess our unbelief, we bewail our self-righteousness.

Petition.

Forgive us all our offences, remember not against us our transgressions, but remember thy great and tender mercies which have been ever of old. Grant unto every one of us a saving interest in the death of Christ, full and free forgiveness of all our sins, and grace and strength to go and sin no more. Lord, help us to love thee, teach us to serve thee. Give us thy strength that we may overcome our corrupt nature. Grant that this day we may have power from on high to resist every temptation, to confess Christ before men, to labour steadfastly with a single eye to thy glory, to live in the spirit of prayer, in faith, humility, self-denial, and love, and to walk before thee in that narrow way which leads to eternal life. Fill us with love to others. Teach us to do good to all men, [and to seek according to our means to visit and relieve the fatherless and the widows in their affliction:] and do thou keep us unspotted from the world.

Pleading.

[Lord, for thy name's sake, hear us. We beseech thee, according to thy infinite mercy, give us grace to serve thee, constantly and unfeignedly. Herein art thou glorified, that we bear much fruit. For thine own glory, grant us thy Spirit, that we may bring forth all the fruits of righteousness.]

Intercession.

And hear us farther in behalf of our relations and friends, our neighborhood, our Minister, and all for whom we ought to pray. Help those that are weak. Comfort those that are cast down. Heal those that are sick. Relieve those that are in distress. Be merciful unto thy Church. O bless us, and cause thy face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Bring the Gentiles to Christ. Gather thy people Israel into thy fold. Give wisdom and power to every effort of Christian love for spreading thy Gospel. Bless all societies formed for this end, and let those who support and conduct them have thy direction and guidance. Lord, grant that the power of the cross of Christ, may at length fully triumph over all error and superstition, all idolatry, and delusion, and sin.

Gracious Lord, not for our worthiness, but for the only name's sake of Jesus Christ, hear these our prayers which we sum up in his own words.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER MORNING FAMILY PRAYER.

Almighty God, source of every good, and fountain of every blessing, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our God and Father, give us the Spirit of adoption, and enable us to cry, Abba, Father. Help us to come and pour out our hearts before thee with the same confidence and affection with which children go to an earthly parent. Enable us to repose on thy love, to tell thee all our desires, and all our sorrows; and, from the heart, to thank thee for all thy goodness to us.

Great and abundant cause we have to bless our God for all that he is in himself, and for all that he is to us. Thy mercies are new every morning. We thank thee that we meet together in peace and safety. Thou hast been our defence and our refuge. Let then the outgoings of the morning and of the evening praise thee.

We thank thee more especially for all the mercies of redemption. In the Gospel of Christ, mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. Thus can even we rejoice in thy power and justice, thy holiness, mercy and love; and bless thee that the light of the knowledge of this thy glory shines, in the hearts of thy people, in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed be thou the just God and the Saviour.

O how unworthy are we of the least of thy mercies! We are all sinful and guilty! We have turned every one to his own way. We would give thee the glory by an ingenuous and free confession that in many things we have all offended thee. From our youth up, even till now, we have been in a great trespass.

We dare not justify ourselves in thy sight, for if we should attempt it, even our own mouths would condemn us. We have omitted to perform many plain duties. We have done many things for which our consciences justly accuse us. All our righteousnesses are defiled. All our prayers and services are polluted.

[Yet spare us, good Lord, spare us, according to thy great compassion and thy tender mercy. Lord God of our salvation, it is thy gracious promise on which our souls rely, that if we confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We now confess our sins, and we ask that they may be forgiven, and that our souls may be purified from sin. We plead thy justice, for Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. We plead thy faithfulness according to thy many precious promises. Let us now by faith obtain those promises.]

Cleanse, we beseech thee, the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name. Strengthen us for the duties of this day. Suffer us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear; but with every temptation make a way to escape. Incline and enable us to walk in that way.

Hold thou up our goings in thy paths that our footsteps slip not. Set a watch before our mouths, and keep the door of our lips, that we offend not with our tongue. May we always speak that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. Enable us also to keep our heart with all diligence, seeing that out of it are the issues of life. Increase our faith, enliven our hope, and enlarge our charity, that we may faithfully serve thee, and in all things glorify thy holy name.

We pray for all our relatives and friends. Give them prosperity both of body and soul.* Grant that grace and peace may be multiplied to all those that call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Let the light of life shine into every benighted heart. Increase especially among the people of this nation, the number of those who know, and love, and serve thee. Bless our rulers, and guide our statesmen; teach thy ministers, and prosper thy people, that there may be no complaining in our streets; and that it may be said of us, "Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

These prayers we offer up in the name and through the mediation of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

EVENING FAMILY PRAYER.

O eternal God, whose name is love, and so loved the world that thou gavest thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life, help us, by the Holy Spirit, to believe in Jesus Christ; and trusting in him to have access unto thee.

We feel our need of a Saviour for sinners; for we all have sinned and come

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*When any member of the family is sick, add—

We particularly commend unto thee that member of our family now in affliction; may faith, patience, submission and resignation be granted in this hour of trial, and in thy own good time remove the affliction. And, Lord, grant that all our tribulations here below may lead us to look at the things which are above, and work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Ever give us a spirit of sympathy, and tender feeling, and love for each other; and may we be always ready to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice.

When any member of the family is on a journey, add—

O Lord, we beseech thee, regard with thy favor, protect and defend *him* who is now absent from us. Take *him* under thy special care. Preserve *him* from every temptation. Prosper *him* in *his* undertakings. May *he* be a blessing wherever *he* goes; and bring *him* in health and peace among us again, that we may together have fresh cause to praise and bless thy holy name.

short of the glory of God. When we look back even on the past day, thy law accuses us of many sins, and our own consciences justly condemn us. We have been forgetful of thy presence; our conversation has been light and trifling; and we have not with a single eye sought thy glory, or copied the holy life of our Saviour Christ. He left us a perfect example, but how seldom we tread in his steps: how little we have of his meekness and lowliness of heart, of his zeal and love! We have sinned, notwithstanding the light of thy word, and the checks of our own consciences.

Grant us thy grace that we may not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Give us true repentance, and such a sense of our sinfulness as may lead us to despair of salvation by any works of our own; and bring us humbled and penitent to the foot of the cross. Help us by faith to behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Teach us to renounce our own righteousness, and to depend wholly on Jesus Christ. May we be able to say and feel, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.

[Teach us to come to Jesus Christ, and now to look to him, not only for pardon and peace, but also for grace and strength. We are weak, but Jesus is strong: grant that we may be made strong in and through him. Draw us to Christ, that we may receive out of his fulness all that we need, repentance, remission of sins, and the gift of thy Holy Spirit; that he may dwell in our hearts by faith, and we be rooted and grounded in love.]

We commend ourselves to thy care during the night. Let no evil come nigh us. May our last thoughts be with thee; and when we awake up, may we be still with thee. Refresh our bodies with the quiet repose of the night, and renew our spiritual strength. Teach us ever to watch and pray, and to be always ready, seeing we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man shall come.

Extend thy merciful care to all that are near and dear to us. We pray for all our relatives. May those that are endeared to us by the ties of nature, be yet more dear by the stronger bonds of grace. Grant that we may be all one in Christ Jesus our Lord. We pray for our Christian friends, for our neighbours, and all with whom we have intercourse.

Bless those that minister before the Lord. May all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, be faithful, wise, humble, and devoted servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every where raise up pastors according to thine heart, which shall feed thy people with knowledge and understanding. Grant thy blessing to every Missionary now preaching Christ to the Gentiles. Cause Jew and Gentile, to turn to the Lord, that they may be saved. Bring on the happy day, when there shall be one fold and one Shepherd; and they shall not hurt, nor destroy in all thy holy mountain.

O thou giver of every good and perfect gift, we praise and bless thee for thy great and continued mercies to us. All things thou givest to us richly for enjoyment. We receive from thee full provision for all our temporal wants, and thou forgivest our iniquities.

[Like as a father pitieth his children, so thou our Lord and Father pitiest them that fear thee. Thou knowest our frame; Thou rememberest that we are dust. Thou hast had compassion on us in our low and lost estate, and thou gavest thy Son to die for us; and now thou offerest and givest us thy Holy Spirit, to soften our hard hearts and to help our infirmities. Thou justifiest us freely by thy grace, adoptest us into thy family, and givest us a hope full of glory.]

Behold what manner of love thou our Father hast bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! God of mercy, grant, only grant, that we may be followers of thee as dear children, and show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, through Jesus Christ.

And now blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace.

ANOTHER EVENING FAMILY PRAYER.

O Thou, who art the God of all the families of the earth, who didst favourably notice Abraham's commanding his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord; be thou present with us now, and enable us by thy Holy Spirit, and through thy Son's intercession, to worship thee in spirit and in truth.

We come before thee acknowledging that we were all born in sin, the children of wrath, and have in common a corrupt nature and a continual propensity to depart from thee. And O how often we have offended thee, the God of all the earth by actual transgressions.

Even in the day that is past, by vain thoughts, by idle words, by sinful indulgences, we have grieved thy Spirit, and we have incurred thy displeasure. Our only refuge is in thy promised mercy in Christ Jesus. We cast ourselves wholly on that mercy. Fixing all our hopes on our Saviour Jesus, we confess our guilt, and earnestly pray that his blood may cleanse us from all sin.

And give us, we beseech thee, the comfortable assurance that our sins are forgiven. Let thy Holy Spirit bear witness with our spirits that we are children of God. Plentifully impart to us the gift of thy Spirit, that we may bring forth love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and temperance. Grant that we may so copy the example of our Saviour, as to be Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men; and have clear evidence of our own salvation. Teach us so to live, that we may glorify thee who hast bought us with a price of such amazing value as the blood of thine own Son.

O that all now kneeling together may indeed obtain mercy in Christ Jesus, be passed from death unto life, and love and serve thee unfeignedly. But, O Lord, how cold is our love to thee! how dead, how dull are our hearts! Help us to love thee; to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. Shed abroad the love of God in our hearts, by giving us the Holy Ghost; and may we be taught of God to love one another. Be thou present with us in our more retired devotions; praying to our Father which is in secret in our closet, may we find his presence and blessing there.

Bless, O Lord, all that are near and dear to us. Many beloved relatives and friends are now absent from us; but thou art with them, and all their wants are known to thee. Give them thy grace; ever guide them here by thy counsel, and may none of them be wanting in thy heavenly kingdom.

We pray for all in authority; Lord, may their counsels be ordered by thee as may be most for the good of our country.

Give, we beseech thee, to all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and ministers of Jesus Christ every where, true knowledge and understanding of thy word; and may they set it forth in their lives accordingly. Make them wise to win souls. Lord, call forth and send out many faithful labourers to the work of the ministry. Bring it to pass that the distant isles shall wait on thee, and the Gentiles come to thy light. Bless every Society established for benefiting the bodies or the souls of men, and especially those in which we are more immediately engaged and interested.

Thanks be unto thee, Holy Lord God, for all thy goodness towards us. How multiplied are thy mercies every day! How excellent is thy loving kindness! We bless thee for all thy long-suffering and forbearance towards us. We bless thee for the infinite mercies of redeeming love. We bless thee for the knowledge of thy salvation, and for the light of thy truth; for protection from every danger during the night, and provision for all our wants by day. Thou hast spread our table with food, and thou givest us every needful good. Accept these our prayers and our praises, which we offer up in and through Jesus Christ our only mediator and advocate. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

FAMILY PRAYER, SUNDAY MORNING.

O Almighty God, Creator, Governor, and Upholder of all things, who after making the heaven and earth, didst rest

on the seventh day, and bless and sanctify it, teach us now, resting from our worldly labours, to devote the day to thy service. O thou whose son did, as on this day, rise again from the dead, grant us grace to rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Help us now, in his name, to seek thy blessing on those holy duties to which the Sabbath is set apart.

We bless and praise thee for the appointment of this day, and for all the means of grace which we enjoy in this highly favoured land. We bless thee that our house is open, that thy ministers have liberty to preach, and we have opportunity and inclination to assemble with thy people and hear thy holy word.

Above all, we thank thee for the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for free justification and salvation through his life, death, and resurrection. We praise thee for the gift of thy Holy Spirit. Blessed, for ever blessed, be thou, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for all these thy benefits.

Great have been thy mercies to us; but with shame we confess that we have slighted thy goodness, and carelessly regarded thy great salvation. How many Sabbaths have we broken; how many invitations of mercy have we neglected; how many warnings and threatenings have we trifled with! how cold have been our prayers; how great our irreverence; how inexcusable our unbelief!

Forgive us, O forgive us, all our negligences, and infirmities, and all our sins and iniquities. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. Return again and bless us. Graciously be present with us, through all the solemn services of this day. Enable us to go to thy house in the spirit of prayer. Pour out upon us, and all that shall meet in thy name, the spirit of grace and supplication. Let none of us draw near to thee with our lips only, while our hearts are far from thee; but enable us to worship thee in spirit and in truth. Cause thy face to shine upon us. Grant that we may find that the Lord is in his holy Temple, and be able to say, It was good for us to have been there! Prepare our hearts to receive thy holy word, that it may be sown in good ground, and bring much fruit to perfection.

[Bless especially such of us as hope this day again to receive the memorials of our Saviour's sufferings and death. May contrition, penitence, faith, humility, and love, be in lively exercise, and be greatly increased.]

Help all of us, not only to abstain from engaging in our usual business and occupation, but also keep us from worldly conversation and from vain thoughts. Raise our affections to things above, and let our conversation be in heaven. Enable us to give this day to reading and hearing thy word, to meditation, self-examination, and prayer; and be thou with us, to bless us in our retired devotions.

And, Father of mercies, we beseech thee to bless all that minister in holy things. Multiply unto them thy grace, that they may be faithful, diligent, and laborious. Grant them humility, disinterestedness, watchfulness, and zeal; may all have grace to take heed to themselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, feeding the Church of God which he has purchased with his own blood. Stand by and strengthen them this day. Open thou their mouths, and enable them to testify boldly the Gospel of the grace of God. We especially pray for him who ministers among us. May he this day be enabled to speak a word in season to us, and to all that hear him.

And, we beseech thee, grant that this thy Sabbath may be distinguished by great and singular mercies to thy Church. Be thou with all Christian congregations meeting to worship thee. By the ministry of thy word this day, convert many sinners; heal those that have backslidden, strengthen those that are weak, and confirm those that are strong. Give thy holy word free course, and let it be glorified in every land, and among every people. Hear us, and answer us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

FAMILY PRAYER, SUNDAY EVENING.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God Almighty, which was, and is, and art to come!

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; thou chargest thine angels with folly, and in thy sight the heavens are not clean; we approach thee, then, only in the name of Jesus Christ.

We confess, O Lord, how defective and defiled all our services are. We acknowledge that our prayers are full of distractions. Our confessions want confessing over again, our very petitions need thy pardon, our cold intercessions for others increase our own guilt, and our unworthy thanksgivings fall utterly short of thy great goodness to us. We carelessly and unbelievingly hear thy word. All we do is polluted and sinful. O forgive us. Forgive the sins of solemn duties; and let that great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, bearing the iniquities of our holy things, plead for us in thy sight.

And grant, most merciful Lord, that it may not be in vain that we enjoy such distinguished privileges as thou hast given to us, lest it be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for us. Let not the seed of the word of God which has this day been sown in our hearts, be plucked away by Satan, lost through temptation, or choked with the cares of this life; but having heard it and received it, incline us to keep it, and do thou cause it to bring forth fruit, an hundred fold.

Grant that our lives may exhibit whose we are and whom we serve: remembering that if we know our Lord's will and do it not, we shall justly have the severer punishment; we humbly beseech thee, strengthen our resolutions to live more decidedly to thee. We feel that we now have again to enter into the contest with our spiritual enemies; make us more than conquerors through him that loved us. We have again to exert ourselves to run the race set before us; teach us ever to look unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. O let us take the more earnest heed never to let slip the things which we have heard.

And we pray for all those who have this day assembled before thee, and heard the word of salvation. Grant unto them the same mercies which we ask for ourselves. Let thy ministers that water others be themselves abundantly watered in their own soul. Strengthen them for thy work, both in body and soul.

Remember in mercy those who by thy providence have been kept from thy house, and let them receive a special supply of thy grace. Grant that those who have wilfully or ignorantly deprived themselves of public worship may have their eyes opened to see, and their hearts awakened to feel, their guilt and their danger, and to learn to flee from the wrath to come. O hasten the time when thy house shall be a house of prayer for all nations, and the whole world shall worship in thy courts.

Thanks be unto God for all the privileges of the past Sabbath. Blessed be thy name that we were permitted to hear thy word, and to join thy people in prayer and praise, and to enjoy so plentifully the means of grace. Blessed be our God for any thing of communion with him, or desire after him. Blessed be God, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, or his holy word, be more understood or valued by us. Our cup runneth over with mercies.

O Lord, if, amid our infirmities, thy Sabbaths here below rejoice the heart; if to rest from earthly labours, and enjoy the privileges of thy house in this world be delightful; how should we thank thee for the prospect of an eternal Sabbath, where thy servants shall serve thee without one wandering thought, without weariness, and without distraction! O grant, in mercy grant, that none of those who have this day met together in thy house, may be wanting in the number of those who shall dwell in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

BRIEF PRAYER FOR A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Gracious Saviour, who hast said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, regard with thy favour, every effort to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Give, holy Lord, we beseech thee, wisdom and discretion, patience, kindness, and perseverance to all who conduct schools. Bless those who endeavour to

instruct the young. Do thou teach them that they may teach others.

Heavenly Father, grant that the children of this school may receive with a humble, teachable, and ready mind, all the instructions given to them according to thy word. Give them thy grace while young, that early seeking Jesus their Saviour, they may find him. Let them remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Teach them to honour their parents and superiors, and to be kind and full of love towards each other. God grant that they may all be trained up in the way in which they should go, and when they are old never depart from it. May the knowledge of the Lord be universally diffused, till at length all shall know thee from the least to the greatest, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BRIEF PRAYER FOR A BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

O Thou who art the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow, who hast declared it to be pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions, bless all thy servants in any way engaged in supporting and carrying on this work of mercy and love. May those that have pity on the poor, find, by happy experience, that they have lent unto the Lord, and that he pays them again what they have given.

Help us to remember what a responsible duty is committed to our charge, rightly to divide and apportion those alms which have been entrusted to us, among those in real necessity; and give us grace to act wisely and faithfully.

In all our visits to the poor and afflicted, do thou go with us. Enable us to speak with them and act towards them, both in fidelity and tenderness. With whatever difficulties, disappointments, or reproaches, we may meet, let us never be weary of well-doing. Enable us, in all things, patiently to follow his example who went about doing good.

Bless us and all men, in every endeavour to reclaim the wicked, instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, and confirm the believer; and make true religion every where spread, till the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A SOCIAL PRAYER.

[O Lord God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of Glory, who art greatly to be feared in the assembly of thy saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about thee; who dwellest in heaven, surrounded with Angels and Archangels, with Cherubim and Seraphim, who veil their faces while they praise and worship; we bow down before thee in the name of Jesus Christ. None other name, but the name of Jesus; none other merits, but the merits of Jesus, would we plead in thy sight: but by Him, through one Spirit may we now have access with confidence to the throne of grace.]

O Thou whose name is Holy, who hast required that we confess our faults one to another; we would now confess our many and our great sins. We have often sinned against thee, and against each other, in thought word, or deed. O forgive our hardness of heart, and our earthly mindedness; all our want of charity, all our hastiness of spirit, all our bad tempers, and every sinful action.

For thine own name's sake blot out our transgressions, and remember not our sins. [We put thee in remembrance, and plead together thy gracious promises. We declare them before thee, that we may be justified. May the blood of Jesus purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.]

Lord of all grace, help us ever hereafter to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. May we, with all lowliness, and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Give us grace so to live, that we may find more and more how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

[Teach us to remember that to us there is one body and one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all; and thus may we love each other as brethren. Help us to love one another even as Christ

has loved us. Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.]

Give unto each of us grace to fulfill our duties toward each other. As *parents*, may we bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and as *children*, obey our parents in all things; as *masters*, may we give unto our servants that which is just and equal, remembering that we also have a master in heaven; and as *servants*, be obedient in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; as *husbands*, loving our wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and dwelling with them according to knowledge; as *wives*, being in subjection to the husband, and having on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

We ask for blessings on our native land. Lord, we would sigh before thee for all the abominations of our country. O how the swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the covetous, the licentious, and the blasphemer abound on every side! Because of these things the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. Spare us, good Lord, spare us, for thy name's sake. Grant, we beseech thee, that as we have been peculiarly distinguished by thy mercies, so it may have to be said of us, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people, for what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for."

Pour out of thy Spirit on all who have the direction of public affairs; on all who minister in holy things; on the magistrates, and on the people; that a general revival of religion may appear among us. Cause thy Church every where to flourish and increase. We pray especially for an increase of the zeal, purity and love, humility and devotion of thy people. Let Zion break forth on the right hand and on the left. Add daily to thy Church, in our own country, and in heathen lands, such as shall be saved. Bless every Missionary gone forth to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and may more and more grace be given unto them all, that they may labour zealously, wisely, and abundantly in thy cause.

And now, Lord, accept our unfeigned thanksgivings, for all those blessings which we daily so richly enjoy. We thank thee more especially for those many dear ties of relationship, affection, and Christian principles, which bind us together. We bless thee for all that sympathy of feeling and union of heart which thou hast given us; and we pray that we may be more and more knit together in Christian love.

But, beyond all other mercies, we bless thee for the common salvation of Jesus Christ; for his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection; for all that he was, and is, and will be. Blessed be God for the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, our only hope, and our sure refuge.

[We trust that we may say we are one in Christ, members of that body of which he is the head; and we bless and praise thee for this thy unspeakable mercy. We thank thee for this opportunity of assembling ourselves together; and we pray that however we may be separated here below, or however scattered in different stations, as we have now met together here on earth, we may hereafter all meet in heaven, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.]

Our Father, &c.

PRAYER FOR THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

I.

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of the spirits of all flesh, the earth is thine, and the fulness thereof, the round world, and they that dwell therein.

We come, as sinners, but trusting in thy beloved Son, our Advocate, and the propitiation for our sins, and looking for the promised spirit of grace and supplication.

Lord, we confess before thee our own sins, and those of our country. Like thy people of old, while we have been greatly distinguished by privileges, we have also been a sinful nation, a people laden with

iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters. We have forsaken the Lord, and have provoked the holy one of Israel. And chiefly, now, we would confess our coldness and indifference in extending the blessings of that glorious Gospel which Thou hast entrusted to us. How slothful and unconcerned have we been to communicate to others the privileges which we enjoy, and to use all the means which thou hast given unto us of imparting the knowledge of Christ to distant lands! To us belong shame and confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee. But to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.

We beseech thee give us a zeal for thy glory. Fountain of light, and life, and grace, pour upon us thy quickening Spirit, to animate and excite us to devote ourselves to thee. Raise up, we pray thee, those who shall unceasingly pray, and give, and think, and labour, for the spread of thy truth. Revive the days of the primitive church, when thy people, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

May the true light come more and more to thy Church, and the glory of the Lord rise upon her; and may the Gentiles come to this light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Lord, we plead the glory of thy great name, faithfulness of thy promises, and the happiness of thine own creation; and with these pleas, we ask, that the heathen may be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

II.

O Lord, hast thou not said, "It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh?" Behold! in these last days: give now to us that ask. With thee is the residue of the Spirit; and the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

Have respect unto the Covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. May the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings, on those people now sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

We pray thee to hasten the coming on of that time, when it shall not be asked, Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? but it shall be said, The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the sight of all nations, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

And grant, gracious Lord, that while the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, all Israel may also be saved. May the veil which remains upon their hearts when Moses is read, be taken away by their turning to the Lord. May this branch which has so long been broken off, at length be grafted into its own Olive-tree.

O let the Deliverer come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

And while we thus pray, we thank thee, good and gracious Lord, for all the blessed signs of the times in which we live. We bless thee for the beginning of a general desire to spread thy truth through the world, and that societies have been raised in these latter days, among all denominations of thy servants, for evangelizing the heathen, and for their conversion from dumb idols to the living God. We thank thee for any success given to these efforts, and would thereby be encouraged to persevere in more zealous labours, and more fervent prayers.

III.

O Father of lights, and giver of all wisdom, bless every Society formed for the conversion of Jews or Gentiles, and for the spread and advancement of thy truth, at home or abroad. Guide the minds of all who conduct their affairs. In all their difficulties and trials, comfort and support them. Especially direct them in the choice of fit instruments. Give them the discerning of spirits, that none may be sent forth but such as thou hast called, prepared, and qualified for the blessed yet arduous office of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. Greatly increase the number of such labourers. Give, O give thou the word, and great shall be the company of preachers. Bless all who support thy cause at

home. May they that love thy Jerusalem prosper in body and soul: in endeavouring to water others, may their own souls be watered.

Look with thy favour on all the missionaries now among the heathen. O prepare thy way in the wilderness. May every valley be exalted, every hill made low; may the crooked be made straight, and the rough places plain; and let thy word every where have free course and be glorified. May thy doctrine, constantly preached by thy servants, drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, and thy word never return unto thee void, but prosper abundantly, and accomplish all that for which thou dost send it. Give thy servants health and strength, vigour of mind, and devotedness of heart; and may they all be chosen vessels to bear thy name before the Gentiles. May the deadening influence of climate, heathen customs, and loss of means of grace, be more than counteracted by a special supply of thy Holy Spirit. May it have to be recorded of each one of them—He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith; and much people were, through him, added to the Lord. Give them grace to be faithful unto death, and may they receive from the Saviour's hands the crown of life and glory. Grant that thousands and tens of thousands may rise up and call them blessed. May the little leaven, leaven the whole lump; and all nations whom thou hast made, fall down and worship before thee, and glorify thy name.

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O our God. For thy dear Son's sake, answer. May he see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Amen, and Amen.

Our Father, &c.

ANOTHER PRAYER FOR THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

I.

O Eternal God, the Lord of Glory, who hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm; the great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts is thy name: Thou, Lord, art good to all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Thou art nigh unto all them that call upon thee, to all that call upon thee in truth.

We are bold, therefore, to come before thee in behalf of a world lying in wickedness. Behold, in thy infinite compassion, dying millions, who have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts! behold them, without Christ, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, and malignity! Lord, we know that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Regard then, now, we beseech thee, in pity, the sad effects of sin, the miserable condition of these thy creatures. Regard, we beseech thee, thine own glory. How long shall thy name be thus profaned? How long shall the prince of darkness usurp the Saviour's promised inheritance and possession? Lord, how long shall the blessed hope that the kingdoms of this world are to be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, tarry ere it come?

Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Sion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the Heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

Lord we believe thy promises; help our unbelief. We are persuaded that thou hast brought the wretched state of the world before the eyes of thy people, that they may pity millions of guilty, accountable, and immortal souls without the knowledge of a Saviour; that while there is time they may pray, and give, and strive to make thy Gospel known among them. Our Saviour has commanded, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and thou hast promised, that thy word shall not return unto thee void; we confidently, therefore, ask thee to bless the cause of Christian missions, that it may advance and grow, and increase till eve-

ry Christian heart become warmed with holy zeal for the spread of the Saviour's name, and kingdom, and glory; and the Gospel of Christ be preached to Jew and Gentile through the world.

II.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, we acknowledge it to be owing to thy infinite mercy, that we were not left in the darkness of heathen lands. Thou didst incline thy servants of old to send faithful missionaries to preach thy glorious Gospel; thou didst support them in all their trials and difficulties, and at length this favoured country became a Christian land. And, Lord, how hast thou since blessed us, above other nations, in the enjoyment of the light of thy truth, and in the power and means to communicate it! We feel that our privileges imply duties. Give us grace, then, to labour, that the word of the Lord may from us sound out in every place. We thank thee that thou hast given many the disposition to aid in this work, and that numbers of thy servants are united in societies, to send abroad the tidings of salvation. Lord, bless them all. Lord greatly increase the number of such as have at heart the good of Sion.

We thank thee, O Lord, that thy holy word is translating into numerous different languages, and that now so many nations may hear in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. Give yet greater success to these efforts. Facilitate this work by imparting, more and more, peculiar talents to those engaged therein. As thou didst give to thy servants of old peculiar skill in erecting the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the temple at Jerusalem, so in this age of thy Church do thou grant special gifts to those engaged in building up thy spiritual temple.

Lord, do thou prepare and call forth labourers. Qualify fit instruments to conduct missionary efforts, and give them faith, wisdom, and judgment, uprightness, patience, and self-denial, a single eye and a single heart, in all their proceedings. So incline their minds, that they may send none to labour among the heathen but those that are first chosen of thee: men anointed with the Holy Ghost. Do thou raise up meek, humble, patient, believing, laborious, and persevering men, counting their work their wages, and looking for the recompence of reward hereafter: men suited to the exigencies of the heathen, in their various degrees of civilization and knowledge, and adapted to meet their wants in each particular situation; men willing to spend themselves, and be spent for Christ. Lord, send forth, we beseech thee, send forth such labourers.

III.

Regard, we beseech thee, O Lord, with thy infinite love, those who have gone forth in thy name to Heathen lands, to labour in making Christ known to the Gentiles. Help them to be the followers of thy Apostles. Grant that they may never lose that first love and ardour of mind which induced them, for Christ's sake, to leave country, home, friends, and relatives. Preserve them sound in doctrine, and pure in their life and conversation. In the faith of Christ may they vanquish the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and overcome apparently insurmountable difficulties. Give unto them utterance, that they may open their mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel. Give them grace to hope even against hope; and in thy own good time remove every opposing obstacle to the universal diffusion of thy truth. Let the course of thy providence prepare the way for thy servants. Let every fresh advance, either in commerce, science, or arts, aid the coming on of the Redeemer's kingdom; all things work together for good, till all shall know thee, the only true God, from the least to the greatest.

And for this we entreat the full outpouring of thy Holy Spirit upon all flesh; upon kings of the earth and all people; upon bishops, priests, deacons, and all Christian ministers; upon princes, senators, and magistrates; young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven.

O Lord, it is not our glory we seek,

but thine. We long, we ask, we pray, that thy will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven; that all nations whom thou hast made may come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name. Lord, thou knowest our desires; we know not how to express them as we should. Do for us and thy Church exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, for thy great name's sake. Amen.

These prayers we offer up in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

EJACULATORY PRAYERS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

On rising in the morning.

I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for thou, Lord, sustained me. *Ps. iii*, 5.

At noon.

At evening, and at morning, and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly. *Ps lv*, 17.

On going to bed.

I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me to dwell in safety. *Ps. iv*, 8.

At going out.

Lord, bless my going out, and my coming in, from this time forth for evermore. *Ps. cxxi*, 8.

At work.

Prosper thou the work of my hands, O Lord: prosper my handy work. *Ps. cx.* 17.

In conversation.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep thou the door of my lips. *Ps. cxli*, 3.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. *Ps. xix*, 14.

When evil entreated.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. *Luke xxiii*, 34.

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. *Acts vii*, 60.

On any loss.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. *Job i*, 21.

In temptation.

How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? *Gen. xxxix.* 9.

Lord cleanse thou me from my secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. *Ps. xix.* 12, 13.

In difficult circumstances.

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee. *Ps. cxliii*, 8.

Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. *Isa. xxxviii*, 14.

For a friend.

The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. 2 *Tim. i*, 18.

Before Prayer.

Lord, teach us to pray. *Luke xi*, 1.

Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. *Ps. lxxx*, 18.

Before reading the Scriptures.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. *Ps. cxix*, 18.

Going to church.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even, fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh crieth out for the living God. *Ps. lxxxiv*, 1, 2.

We will go into his tabernacle; we will worship at his footstool. *Ps. cxxxii*, 7.

On entering God's House.

This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. *Gen. xxviii*, 17.

On hearing the Scriptures.

Sanctify us through thy truth: thy word is truth. *John xvii*, 17.

After worship.

The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary. 2 *Chron. xxx*, 18, 19.

Occasional ejaculations.

O Lord, be gracious unto us, we have waited for thee. *Isa. xxxiii*, 2.

Father, glorify thy name. *John xii*, 28.

Lord, save us, we perish. *Matt. viii*, 25.

Jesus thou Son of David, have mercy on me. *Mark x*, 47.

Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. *Luke v*, 12.

Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. *Mark ix*, 24.

Lord, help. *Matt. xv*, 25.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN HEARER.

CHAPTER I.

The General Importance of Hearing the Word.

When the ground in summer has become parched and barren from a long drought, how delightfully refreshing are the grateful showers that descend from heaven, and clear the atmosphere, and cool the air, and water the earth. A freshness appears in the verdure, and the plants revive, the flowers burst forth, new fragrance perfumes the garden, and all wears the aspect of reviving, and returning health, and animation.

Such is the effect of a faithful preaching and hearing of the word of God. Like the earth which silently receives the rain, and exhibits the blessing in its varied and lovely and beneficial produce; so the practical hearer insensibly receives a benefit which his life manifests, and which blesses all with whom he has intercourse. "My doctrine," says Moses, "shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, as the showers that water the earth." St. Paul conveys similar ideas when he says, "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God."

A free and gratuitous gift, directly from our heavenly Father, is the rain that fertilizes the land on which it falls; and similar is the greater blessing which we have now to consider, to which man is mainly indebted for his spiritual fertility and fruitfulness.

We shall best see the importance of hearing the word, by considering, first, *the Divine authority with which it is delivered to us.* When the Ministers of God speak according to the will of God, and by virtue of their office, it is to be regarded as if God himself addressed us. The foundation of their office is a divine commission—"Go ye, and teach all nations—to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. xxviii, 19, 20. Our Lord told the seventy disciples whom he sent out as teachers—"He that heareth you, heareth me: and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." Luke x, 16. The whole dispensation of the Gospel is a divine message, an embassy from God to man. What the Apostles could in the highest sense, as divinely inspired, declare, ministers can, in an inferior, but, as far as their testimony is according to God's word, in a solid and true sense, still declare; "God hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." As the ambassador's voice is the voice of the king, so is the minister's voice the voice of God.

Consider then, Christian reader, that God speaks to men by his ministers.*

* Bishop Jewell observes, "Some there are that thus say, 'O that I might hear Christ, or Peter, or Paul! I would verily believe what they should preach!' This is fondness and curious vanity; for whensoever thou dost hear the minister of God preach unto thee the word of life, and teaching thee the truth of the Gospel, thou hearest Paul, and Peter, and Christ himself.

If thou despisest the word of God spoken unto thee by him, and the grace which God offereth thee by him, thou despisest Christ himself, and heapest up the heavy displeasure of God against thee."

The ministry of the word is a divine embassy to your souls. The foundation of all duty, and of all acceptable obedience, is the will of God. He addresses you, and communicates his mind and will to you, by his ministers; and he requires you to hear them, for they are "the messengers of the Lord of Hosts," and the people should "seek the law at their mouth." Mal. ii, 7. Consider the majesty and greatness of Him who sends the message—thy Creator, thy Preserver, thy Judge. If a servant disregard a master's word; if a subject refuse to hear his king; if a child turn away from a father speaking; the insult and injury are obvious: but to refuse to hear the Lord of all lords, the King of all kings, the universal Father, surely includes each particular offence with special and peculiar aggravations.

It is in infinite tenderness that God speaks by man to his creatures. If he himself were to speak personally with us, we know by a striking example, (Ex. xx, 18, 19,) that we could not bear the brightness of his glory. Even the mission of holy angels would terrify, (Matt. xvi, 6; Luke i, 12, 29; ii, 9,) and could not meet our necessities, for they have never tasted the bitterness of sin, nor themselves experienced the blessedness of pardon and reconciliation, and therefore could not speak with fellow feeling and sympathy. How unsearchable here is the divine mercy and condescension in committing unto sinful men the word of reconciliation for their sinful and offending brethren! It has been observed, "When the kings of the earth appoint ambassadors, they generally depute them only to kings; nor would they deign to send a solemn embassy to their own rebellious subjects, when vanquished, disarmed and condemned. But the King of kings and Lord of lords appoints ambassadors from himself to poor apostate worms, and helpless perishing sinners. Earthly princes select persons of dignity and eminence to represent their persons and act by their authority on these important occasions; but the Lord of glory deputes pardoned rebels and reconciled enemies to go to their former companions in rebellion on this embassy of peace."

Thus, though the treasure be puti n earthen vessels, ministers are still "Stewards of the mysteries of Christ," and ambassadors from God to man. They are sent of God himself to dispense the treasures of his truth, and preach the gospel of reconciliation, that men may believe and be saved. Hence, no one can enter the ministry in the Church of England, without a public declaration that he trusts that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him that office and ministration.

Do you try to shake off the conviction of the divine authority of the preached word, by talking of the weakness of the instrument? remember, that an important message is not the less important because the *person* of the messenger may have little to command respect. Do you say that he may commit mistakes, or utter inelegances, or even fall into some errors? but remember, again, that there is an infallible touchstone of the truth. Acts xvii, 11. They who put off the conviction of their sins, by the thought that the voice which they hear from their minister is not the voice of God, only manifest that they have no disposition to obey, and deceive themselves, and farther despise God, seeing they add insult to rejection, by denying the messenger as well as the message.

Rather, Christian Reader, let the infinite condescension and compassion of God, in stooping to our weakness and infirmities by a human and weak messenger, so far from suggesting any excuse for slighting the message, add a fresh motive for gratefully listening to all that is said. Let us often enquire whether we have received this momentous embassy with all the seriousness and reverence which the voice of God imperatively demands. Augustine says, "If God speaks, wo be to him that does not hear!"

The *immensely weighty interests which the word brings before us*, shows the farther importance of hearing. Moses told Israel, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day,—for it is not a vain thing for you,

because it is your life." Deut. xxxii, 46, 47. It is to regulate every day of our lives: it is to direct every thought of our hearts, every word of our lips, and every part of our conduct: destitute of its influence, we are blind, ignorant, and wretched, living and labouring without adequate ends, and not only furthering, but constantly weakening and destroying our true interest and happiness: under its influence, we are wise to salvation, filled with solid peace, and in the pathway to eternal life and blessedness. It is the only light athwart the dark valley of the shadow of death, and discovers to us sinners, a free and complete salvation; the Almighty, our Friend; his only begotten Son, our Redeemer; his blessed Spirit, our Teacher and Comforter; and his eternal bliss, our everlasting home.

Hearing the word is the appointed means of receiving spiritual blessings. If you want spiritual life, "hear and your souls shall live:" Isa. lv, 3. "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." John v, 25. If you want nourishment in the spiritual life, "desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." 1 Pet. ii, 2. If you want comfort, the office of the ministry is *to comfort all that mourn.* Isa. lxi, 2. If you want sanctification, *sanctify them*, prays our Redeemer, *through thy truth; thy word is truth.* By what was the Church of God first commenced? by hearing. Acts ii, 41. By what is it that men are saved? through hearing: 1 Cor. i, 21; Rom. x, 8. the power is of God; he gives the increase; but hearing is the means to be used by us. By what are difficulties cleared up to us? by hearing; as our Lord showed that Malachi iv. 5, intended to foretel John the Baptist coming in the spirit and power of Elijah: Mark ix, 12. so Philip made Isaiah liii, 7, intelligible to the Eunuch, Acts viii, 32. and our Lord brought out the doctrine of the resurrection from Ex. iii, 6, Matt. xxii, 31. Or, how are the Scriptures personally applied to our individual cases? by hearing; so the men of Nazareth had Isa. lxi. 1, applied to them in particular. The late Mr. Robinson of Leicester well asked; "Who are instructed in the way of truth and righteousness? who are awakened to a proper sense of their guilt and danger? who are warned and effectually persuaded "to flee from the wrath to come?" who are conducted to the knowledge of salvation? to faith hope, and peace? Who are animated with true Christian zeal, cheered with the lively prospect of heaven, and advancing in all the graces of sanctification? are not these the persons who have listened with serious attention to the word of life and received it in love?" (See his "Christian System.") In short, if you want a cheering evidence that you belong to Christ, it is a grand and distinguishing character of those who shall hereafter dwell with him—"my sheep hear my voice." Our Lord solemnly asserts, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." John v, 24. How incalculably important is that with which God has connected such blessings! If it be only as we regard the word that we have reason to hope that we are disciples of Christ, and going to dwell with him forever, how infinitely needful to hear that word!

The continued ministry of the word from the beginning of the Church, shows its importance. The plan of public instruction seems to have existed from the earliest ages. Moses was assisted in instructing the people by the seventy elders. Numbers xi. Jehoshaphat sent Levites and Priests through the land, "and they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them." 1 Chron. xvii, 9. Israel was without *the true God*, when they were *without a teaching priest.* 2 Chron. xv, 3. On the return from captivity, Ezra, the Scribe, *stood upon a pulpit of wood which they had made for the purpose*, and so taught the people; and the Priests and Levites *read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.* Neh. viii, 4—8. We are informed, (Acts xv, 2,) "Moses of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day." Our Lord himself so preached in the synagogue at Nazareth, (Luke iv, 16—21,) and on the

Mount. His very business on earth, (who is Lord of heaven and earth,) was going about preaching that men might hear. He sent forth the seventy Disciples and the twelve Apostles to preach the word. In the book of Acts, we see that as it was the constant practice of Christian Teachers to preach, so it was the habit of Christians to hear the word. In the primitive Church the same practice was continued. Clement says to the Corinthians, "Hearkening diligently to his words, ye were enlarged in your bowels, having his sufferings always before your eyes." Justin Martyr says, "Upon the day called Sunday, all that live either in city or country meet together at the same places, where the writings of the Apostles and Prophets are read as much as time will give leave; when the Reader has done, he who presides, gives an admonition, instructing the people, and animating them to the practice of such lovely precepts; at the conclusion of this discourse, we all rise up together and pray." Tertullian shows (in his Apology) that Christians met together for the purpose of reading the Scriptures, exhorting and reproving: and he says in another place, "The Scriptures are read, psalms sung, and discourses publicly delivered." Cyprian mourns under the persecution as hindering them from seeing the assembled fraternity and hearing the Bishops discoursing. Athanasius, in his apology to the Emperor, shows how they crowded to the Church in his days, at Alexandria. Ambrose, Augustine, and others, also testify how the people continued to hear. We need not descend farther, as these facts sufficiently show that the public ministry of the word has been the invariable practice of the Church. While the fact of the public ministry continued from the earliest ages is thus clear, all history testifies, that religion proportionably flourishes or declines as the practice of hearing obtains, or is disregarded.—Wherever vital piety, with all its holy fruits, abounds generally and extensively, there the word is faithfully and largely dispensed, and listened to. In Papal countries the word of Christ is little heard. In Mahomedan countries, it is almost unknown. In Heathen countries is has never been declared. In Protestant countries an increasing interest in it is accompanied with an increasing growth of general morality and godliness.* History and fact bear full evidence then to the general importance and advantages of hearing.

The special advantages which we enjoy, show us our peculiar obligations to hear. The Israelites had many special advantages for becoming wise unto salvation. "He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel." Psalm cxlvii. Moses appeals to them, "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard, and live?" Though this, in its literal meaning, was only true of one generation of the people of Israel, yet the whole nation were peculiarly distinguished by this eminent and special advantage, that "to them were committed the oracles of God." They exclusively among the nations of the earth had the full privileges of divine Revelation afforded to them, with all the light and truth, the gracious promises and blessed prospects, which it discovers.

But we Christians have superior advantages which bring higher responsibility; our neglect of them is more dangerous; by our improvement of them we may derive a larger benefit. The whole of the sacred Scriptures is now in our possession and exalted as the publicly acknowledged Code of faith and duty. The Apostle's statement—"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," belong to us. We may every day "hear in our own tongue the wonderful works of God." O that we were duly sensible of the immense blessing of having the word

* It has been observed, "Without this hearing, we see the power of religion lost, and the awe of God wear off the spirits of men, as appears in the atheism of Popish countries, where hearing the word is in a manner swallowed up by the mass; and in the general depravity of those among ourselves who turn their backs on this part of the worship of God." *Eastcheap Lectures.*

of Christ so richly and so abundantly as we have!

Then consider our peculiar national advantages. We, in this highly privileged country, the glory of the Reformation, the bulwark of the Protestant Faith, where the ark of God seems specially to have rested, have been blessed of God in an eminent degree. Look at our Reformers, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley; look at those of later days, Hall, and Hopkins, and Beveridge; look even at comparatively modern times, at Milner, Robinson, and Scott, and say, whether God's truth has not by them, and in their writings, been plainly placed before our eyes. Then look more particularly at your Sabbath privileges, and the abundance of the Divine Word read or proclaimed by his ministers, from thousands of pulpits every Sabbath. *The word of God is not bound*, his house is not closed, his ministers have liberty to preach from Sunday to Sunday, and we have opportunity to go and hear. Hundreds of millions of our fellow creatures there are in Heathen lands, that have none of these advantages; and many millions there are in Roman Catholic countries to whom the Bible is yet a sealed book. It is not so with us. God affords us eminent and increased facilities in this day; the Holy Scriptures have been largely distributed, there has been a remarkable and extended revival of religion, and on every side faithful ministers preach his Gospel. What more could have been done for us?

These advantages lay upon us an accumulated load of obligation. It was said to Israel, (Amos iii, 2,) "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." It was said to those who heard our Lord, "Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you." Matt. xi, 21, 22. What then shall be said to those in Britain who shut their eyes to the light which shines so clearly, and close their ears to the truth which sounds so distinctly. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Luke xii, 48. Is it not important how we hear? O, let us British Christians duly improve our singular advantages of becoming *wise unto salvation;* and as we are favoured beyond others in our privileges, may we be eminently devoted to God, and according to our special blessings, be universally "a holy nation, and a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

The freedom with which we may now obtain spiritual blessings further shows the importance of hearing. A day is coming when if we now refuse to hear God's words, no possible effort or sacrifice can obtain us the least spiritual blessing, or comfort. Luke xvi, 24—31. But now every blessing bestowed through faithful hearing may be readily obtained. The blessings of salvation are freely given. Not only is the invitation from God to sinners to return, free and spontaneous, but the blessings are granted *without money*, and *without price*. It would not meet our necessities that the poor and needy were invited, had they to purchase the blessings which they require with some equivalent. They are therefore bestowed freely. There seems to be in the minds of the sacred writers, a manifest care to announce the doctrine of free salvation so fully as to exclude all doubt. There is often on this point a remarkable repetition of expression. Thus St. Paul describes our being justified, to be *freely* and *by his grace;* and he asserts our being saved, to be, "by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works." Isaiah invites all—"Come ye, buy, and eat, without money, and without price;" without any compensation from man, or any deserving on his part. So St. Paul tells Titus, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." The value of this repetition is very great. In the pride of our unhumbled hearts, we are peculiarly disposed to rely on our own doings, rather than on the grace of God, and to imagine that we must by some acts of our own merit the blessing of the Gospel: and depression and sense

of guilt in the contrite, leads them to fear that they can have no title to, and shall for ever lose, such inestimable benefits. By a free salvation, the proud are humbled, and the depressed lifted up; *boasting is excluded*, and all glory given to God. But if this be the case, O how important to avail ourselves of the golden opportunity! how important to listen, to hear, to repent, to believe, and be saved!

This will be seen in one farther consideration, *the earnestness with which God himself presses us to receive his word.* Some of the most affecting addresses in the Bible are on this point. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments." Isa. xlviii, 18. "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" Ps. lxxxi, 13. "O that they were wise, that they understood this!" Deut. xxxii, 29. How earnest is God in his gracious invitations, as if to set before us, in the most lively way, the immense importance of eternal things! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price; Isa. lv, 1. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead!" 2 Cor. v, 20. This earnestness shows the immense importance of attending to the Gospel, while it implies man's indifference to it, and God's tender commiseration and compassion. Men when thirsty are sensible enough of their need; but souls destitute of spiritual blessing, have by nature no desire for them. Their attention must be roused by earnest calls and affectionate entreaties. Though men be famishing, they perceive not their want of spiritual food; though they greatly need it, they desire it not. There is in the mode of expression in Isaiah, lv, 1, an ardour of expression, a repetition of entreaty, a vehemence of invitation, which shows the immense importance of accepting it. It is a case of life and death. If the traveller comes not to the water, he droops, he dies, in the wilderness. There is no other fountain, no other way of gaining relief. Disregard this, and you lose every thing. Attend to this, and you pass safely on to your joyful and eternal home. Thus earnest is God in his invitation. O remember who it is that invites—the Lord of heaven and earth; He who is perfect truth. Reader! refuse not to listen to the joyful sound. God would not so address his sinful creatures, were not the subject a matter of infinite moment to them. There is a reality, a value, and a magnitude in the concerns of the immortal soul, far beyond our highest thoughts; and surely, that our souls should perish, when salvation is thus freely and earnestly set before us, is grievous and lamentable beyond conception!

How unspeakable is the love of God to man! He might justly have left us to perish in our sin and rebellion; but he so loved the world, that he gave his only Son to die for us: and as if this were not enough, when we carelessly disregard the blessings which he has thus procured for us, he sends to invite us, to reason with us, and to persuade us to embrace the invaluable mercies obtained at so costly a price. God would not be at all this cost for a thing of inferior moment. All this love cannot be slighted without immense danger.

Once more—*the word which we now hear will judge us in the great day.* The preached Gospel will follow us into another world, and will there appear either against us to condemn us, if we have disregarded it, or for us to justify us if we have received it. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day!" John xii, 4, 8. Men now throw every contempt upon it. The Gospel is preached in their very towns and streets, and multitudes never hear it at all, and multitudes disregard all they hear. O how will such be astonished and confounded to find that word, which they reckoned little better than folly, or altogether despised as foolishness, exalted as the rule of final judgment, and that which decides their never-ending condition!

The importance of hearing may be put into another light, by considering the weakness of those objections which are sometimes brought against this duty.

Thus it is often said, *I can read and learn at home:* I have good books in my library, and there are better published sermons than I am likely to hear, and I can think of these at my leisure, and turn them over and over in my mind. What! will you pretend to be wiser than God? God has commanded you to hear his ministers. Hearing is a divine appointment. You cannot at home obey the injunction to hear his truth, and that of "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." O venture not to impugn by your vain reasoning the wisdom and authority of the great Legislator, or to set aside his authorised mode of doing you good by equivalents and expedients, subversive in this case of the obedience which you owe to Him! There is a sympathy of feeling from the delivery of the truth among many gathered together. There is a life and power in the faithful ministry of the word; the voice, the earnestness, and the affection of the preacher, infinitely more affect the heart, that a sermon which is merely read in private, can possibly do. How will God from your own conduct condemn you? Worldly men do not prefer reading a play to hearing it. Be assured that Christians will not, and cannot, when they act in character, attend to only one part of their duty, and that at the time when they should be fulfilling another. It will be sufficient for them to know that God ever manifests his special blessing with the assemblies of his people. Exod. xxv, 22; 2 Chron. vii, 12—16; Matt. xviii, 20. O lose not all the interest in the blessing promised, by perversely choosing to walk in your own way!

But you farther object, *There is nothing new in what I hear:* I know it already: it is the same thing over and over again. But do you not make a mistake, if you expect that the minister should be always delivering something new? It is true, that a wise and diligent minister will not fail *rightly to divide the word of truth.* He will give the result of his own study and experience, and therefore original views of divine truth: and in this respect "every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasury things new and old." Matt. xiii, 52. Yet the ministerial office consists much in reminding, (Rom. xv, 14, 15,) and stirring up, and establishing those that are informed. 1 John ii, 7. In the words of St. Peter, it is "to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you do know them;" (2 Pet. i, 12,) or, as St. Paul says, "to write the same things to you to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." Phil. iii, 1. The ministry of the word is God's plan for nourishing the soul, just as eating food is his plan for nourishing the body; and as you need the same kind of food day after day for your body, so you need this same kind of instruction repeatedly for your soul. There is good reason to believe that our Lord delivered to different congregations several of his discourses over again. These observations are not intended as an excuse for indolence in the minister, but as a guard against fastidiousness in the hearer. It was an old objection made against attending sermons, "We hear the same thing over and over!" and St. Chrysostom (in his 3d Homily on the 2d Thessalonians) thus answers the objection:—"And do you not hear the same thing in the theatre? have you not the same sight at the horse race? Are not all things the same? Does not the same sun rise every morning? Do you not eat the same meat every day? I would ask you, seeing you hear the same things every day, what portion of the Prophets, what Apostle, what Epistle, was read? But you cannot tell: they are perfectly new and strange to you. When therefore you are disposed to be idle, you pretend the same things are read: but when you are asked concerning them, you are as men that never heard them. If they are the same, you should have known them: but you know nothing of them. For this reason you ought to attend, because they are the same, because we bring nothing strange or new to your ears." O, in the great day of account, how glad would the now-neglectful hearer, be, could he but once more have the

opportunity of hearing and accepting those gracious invitations which he now slights as things he sufficiently knows!

But it is still farther objected, *The minister that I can hear does not edify me:* he is weak, foolish, and of small ability. Leaving to a subsequent chapter the consideration of the respective duties of ministers and people, we will allow the truth of your objection; but still it is no sufficient answer to the duty brought before you. What if it should be true of your minister, as it has been of many others, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of this world, to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of this world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are!" 1 Cor. i, 27 28. Nay, still more, are you in earnest for your eternal interest? What if "it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," (1 Cor i, 21,) and you should be among the happy number! Herbert quaintly, but justly, says—

The worst speak something good: if all want sense,
God takes a text and preacheth patience.
He that gets patience, and the blessing which
Preachers conclude with, hath not lost his pains.

Remember, you have the ministry, not of angels, but of men, and God has therein consulted your real interest and edification. Refuse not then the treasure on account of the earthen vessel which contains it. If really hungering and thirsting after righteousness, you will gladly receive genuine food for your soul, though not set before you in the manner best suited to your taste. Nor is there any Christian so wise and learned but that he may receive benefit either from a different mode of treating that which he knew before, or by having it afresh presented to his attention.

There are other inferior objections, which still sometimes keep men from hearing the word. Thus there are some in superior stations, heads of families, and persons of rank or learning, who seem to *think themselves above hearing:* it will do very well for the common people, and for their children and servants; but as for them, they need it not. O strange infatuation! are they above God who commands them to hear? have they not also a *Master in heaven?* They expect obedience from their inferiors, while they themselves disobey a plain direction of their great Superior. They would directly dismiss a servant who disobeyed repeated injunctions, and yet deceive themselves by thinking that they may with impunity despise the Divine will. How if it should be found that their fancied wisdom is a folly above the most extravagant and absurd weakness of those they most despise! *The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.* Nor is the case better with those who plead their *business as an excuse for not hearing.* What is it but a plain confession of their blindness and depravity. They acknowledge that they are so blind, that they do not see their eternal interests to be the great concern and business of life; that they are so depraved, that they are not ashamed to avow their very blindness as an excuse for their sin. Nor can we allow either of another excuse, *I cannot recollect what I hear.* We recollect what we are interested in and attend to. A man in business will recollect a great variety of particulars which are needful to be remembered; a servant will bear in his mind a message from his master; all will remember a temporal benefit promised them. The great reason of forgetfulness is, we want a real concern about our salvation! The poor sometimes say, *We have not suitable clothing!* Why should that more prevent you going to hear, than it does going to visit your friends, or to get your food, or to receive directions from your earthly employers? Consider if the real meaning of this be not, My pride will be offended by contrast with others, and I do not think my soul worth the humbling of my pride.*

* There are some other things which keep the poor from church, that it may be well briefly to notice. In various parts of the country, many will attend in the afternoon, who do not come in the morning. They indulge themselves with more rest—the wife wants to prepare a hot dinner for the family—to get the children dressed

Others think *unfavourable weather quite a sufficient reason for absence.* There are those who judge otherwise. There was a pious lady who was blind, and yet, after she became pious, to the end of her life, (for thirty-five years,) constantly, twice every Sunday, in rain, hail, or snow, as well as on fine days, she went through all weathers to hear her stated minister. Her soul eminently prospered. Thus like Anna, who "fourscore and four years served God with fastings and prayers night and day," she left an example condemning those who for slight reasons stay at home.

Is not the hidden and secret cause of all these difficulties really this—I do not like to be restrained from my own way—I do not like the effort which it requires to go. I do not like to be reproved for sin—I prefer present recreation and self-indulgence. And what is this, but rebellion against the Most High? and where will this end, but in certain and irretrievable ruin? Break manfully and at once through all these obstructions. Delay no more. There is a happiness ready for you of which you have not yet tasted. Hear the voice of God, and you shall enjoy privileges and blessings of which you have at present no conception, and which you would not part with for all the world.

out—and sometimes poor people are such bad managers, that they have even to wash their clothes on Sunday morning. Christian females, in visiting the poor, might do much good in pointing out the evils of these different habits, and the way to remedy them by a little care and forethought, and the blessing which the fear and service of God would bring to the whole family. There are other cases where little children prevent parents attending; but much could be done by a little management among the poor themselves. How do they contrive when they leave home for worldly things, for the market, for pleasure? Their contrivances for worldly purposes will generally answer all their objections. A careful and pious wife will soon learn how to provide on the Saturday all that is needful to make her husband and family comfortable, without interfering with the duties of the Sunday.

CHAPTER II.

National Benefits of Hearing the Word.

Besides those reasons which have been already noticed, affecting us as individuals, there are other considerations, on the Importance of Hearing the Word, which affect us as members of society. The constant preaching and full reception of the word of God, is one great means of advancing national prosperity.

We will not enter at large into the beneficial influence of Christianity on the temporal happiness of man. It has already been sufficiently shown* how prejudicial has been the tendency of Paganism in all domestic relations, and in civil and social life; and that the improvement made since the introduction of Christianity can only be attributed to the Gospel. Nor will we dwell on the general benefits arising from the pastoral office of faithful ministers in their respective parishes through a country. Their residence, their personal intercourse, their domestic and ministerial visits both among rich and poor; their principles, and conversation, and labours, have an immense local influence of the most beneficial kind. We would chiefly confine our remarks in this chapter to national advantages connected with that scriptural preaching and faithful hearing, which will ever be found to be the most lively, powerful, and effective means of imparting and maintaining genuine Christianity, with all its blessings. We say scriptural preaching, because human devices, mere controversy, novelties of pretended philosophy, cold statements of truth, superstition, or enthusiasm, have no efficacy to do good. Only the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, with all its connections and lessons, delivered in simple dependance on the grace of the

* See Bishop Porteus' "Beneficial effects of Christianity on the Temporal Concerns of Mankind, proved from History and from Facts.

the Holy Ghost, is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

The preaching of the word *brings divine truth prominently before all ranks and all classes.* Its very nature is, that it must be done in public, and must therefore be known. It is like lifting up a standard which all may see, or sounding a trumpet which all must hear. Persons may, or may not, read books; may, or may not, meditate on what they read; may, or may not, hear private religious conversations: but where large towns are filled with places of worship, and every village has its church, they must know that there is a public declaration of religious truth. The attendance of their neighbours is calculated to rouse them to attend, or at least to bring the subject before their minds. This prominent and agressive character of public preaching is especially valuable, as men are naturally disposed to put off and lay aside all religious consideration.

Ministers, in the discharge of their office, *have fully to state relative and social duties*, and are able to enforce them *with obligations operating in all circumstances, and where human motives cannot reach.* Without entering at large into the minute details which the holy Scriptures give of all the relative duties of Kings, Magistrates, Judges, and Subjects; of Parents and Children; of the married state; of Masters and Servants; nothing can be more clear than that those principles and that conduct which is eminently calculated to promote integrity, humanity, harmony, mutual benevolence, active diligence in every station, and the universal good of the whole state, are in that holy book every where inculcated. If the spirit of the Christian Religion animated any nation, the people would be united, the rulers righteous, and the kingdom prosperous, peaceful, and blessed in the highest degree.

Look at its efficacy with regard to Rulers, and all having power over others. Christianity turns them from ambition, and lust of dominion, and desire of mere human glory. It rectifies the great principles which direct and regulate their conduct, and puts them under an authority which no merely human constitution can impart, even that of an Almighty King, God over all, showing that all power is received from him, is held under him, and must be accounted for to him. It brings them under the influence of those high and holy principles which tend to make men just and peaceful, righteous and merciful, restrainers of every evil, and promoters of every good; and thus puts all the weight of power, rank and elevation, on the side of the real welfare of the state.*

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*Augustine, in his Treatise on the City of God, (Book v, chap. 24.) shows, in his account of the truly happy Emperor, what is the real happiness of those in authority, which he afterwards illustrates by the examples of Constantine, Theodosius, and other Christian Emperors; he says, "We Christians do not say that Christian Emperors are happy because they have a long reign; or die leaving their sons in quiet possession of their empires, or have been ever victorious, or powerful, against all their opposers. These are but gifts and solaces of this laborious and joyless life. Idolaters, and such as belong not to God, may enjoy them: because God in his mercy will not have those that know him to believe that such things are the best goods he gives. But happy they are, say we, if they reign justly, free from being puffed up with the exaltations of their attendants, or the cringing of their subjects, if they know and remember themselves to be but men. If they make their power a means to promote the true adoration of God's majesty; if they love, fear, and honour him; if they long most for that empire where they need not fear to have partners; if they be slack to revenge, and quick to forgive; if they use correction for the public good, and not for private hate; if their pardons promise not liberty of offending, but, indeed, only hope of reformation; if they counterpoise their enforced acts of severity, with the like weight of bounty and clemency: if their lusts be the less, because they have the larger licence, if they desire to rule their own, rather than anothers' estates; and if they do all things, not for glory, but for charity, and, with all, and before all, give God the due sacrifice of prayer for their imperfections: such Christian Emperors we call happy; here, in hope, and hereafter, when what we look for comes indeed."

The Reformer Bullinger takes a similar view, in an address to Edward VI. prefixed to the second volume of his Decades, bidding him hold it for a most undoubted truth, that true prosperity was to be procured by him no other way than by submitting himself and his whole kingdom to Christ, the highest Prince, and by framing all matters of religion and justice throughout his dominions according to the rule of God's word. The whole of the address (published in 1550) is a striking display of true Christian politics.

And with regard to Subjects, the Scriptures place loyalty and obedience to rulers on a ground far higher than mere human legislation; they show that the powers that are among men are ordained of God, and make obedience to human authority, a part of the will of God. Thus submission and honour, and tribute, are to be rendered not from fear, but for conscience; as a divine obligation; as a part of the law of God.

Let scriptural truth then prevail, and it is impossible that either tyranny or treason, oppression or insubordination, can extensively prevail. In fact, as nations consist of individuals, families, and neighbours, that which eminently promotes the happiness and prosperity of the lesser circles, at the same time advances the general welfare of the whole country. As the parlour is, so will be the family, the social circle, the neighbourhood, the province, and the Country; it is the circle nearest the centre, which propels each concentric circle to the utmost border of the lake; let family religion flourish, and the country must flourish; let social and relative duties be discharged, and national righteousness will elevate and bless the whole empire: and nothing but the divine authority of God's word has majesty, and power, and efficacy to accomplish these results.—Those individuals who are most constant and regular in their attendance on the ministry of the word, are those who are most diligent as rulers, most loyal as subjects most honest as tradesmen, most faithful as hubands and wives, most liberal as men of benevolence, and most active in every good work, as well as most backward to every evil work.

The preaching of the word has *a remedial power over all those evils into which a nation may have sunk.** *Is a nation sunk in barbarism?* the preaching of the Gospel is the main spring in civilization; it is the grand civilizer of the savage. In proportion as it prevails, it gradually removes ferocious and cruel practices, and in their place infuses kindness urbanity, and suavity. *Is a nation enveloped in idolatry?* it is the appointed means of turning them from dumb idols to serve the living God, and a means that has never been perseveringly tried without success. *Is a nation illiterate and ignorant?* it promotes every kind of valuable knowledge. There is so much antiquity and history, of geography and chronology, of learned languages and of arts and sciences, embodied in the Bible, and it goes so directly to the origin, and leads to the result of all things, that scriptural knowledge eminently tends to advance the general cultivation of the great mass of mankind. *Is a nation perfidious and unworthy of confidence?* the preaching of the Gospel diffuses a spirit that leads to faithfulness in treaties and peace among nations, and that promotes those commercial virtues by which confidence is secured, and commerce extended. Jovian, perhaps the first really Christian Emperor, under many temptations to a contrary course, executed with the utmost fidelity, a disadvantageous treaty. *Has a nation fallen into great profligacy and wickedness?* let the Gospel be fully preached, and it will raise the standard of public morals; many will become real Christians, and the whole

* Bishop Middleton, in a Sermon preached at Calcutta, in 1820, powerfully urges this principle. He says, "What is the difference between the state of the world at present, and as it existed two thousand years ago? it is the difference which has been made by the preaching of the Gospel. If any doubt this assertion, let him turn his eyes to the condition of those regions on which the Sun of Righteousness has not yet risen. Some profess to expect all improvement from a natural expansion of the human powers: but is it not constantly affirmed and believed that the state of this country is precisely such as it was in the days of Alexander? unless indeed there be reason to suspect that it is somewhat deteriorated. On the other hand, do we not know that the highest degree of knowledge and holiness, of civil liberty and of social happiness, do actually exist, where at that period a state of things prevailed, as bad perhaps in all respects as any which we now contemplate? To reclaim our ancestors from their idolatrous and cruel superstitions, was apparently as difficult and certainly as benign a task as any which the church would now accomplish. And thus it is throughout the world: nations become enlightened and happy in proportion to their Christian knowledge, and to the purity in which they have received and maintained the faith of Christ; or in the words of my text, in proportion as the Church has made known to them the manifold wisdom of God."

See his Sermons and Charges, pp. 123, 124.

community will be more or less influenced by their example to turn from open sin; vice will be discountenanced, and true morality extended: and what greater national benefit can be conferred? "righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Again, *has a nation been groaning under cruel and oppressive laws?* the healing and salutary principles of the Gospel, when fully preached, make their way, through various channels, and almost imperceptibly, into the minds of those who frame and pass the laws of a country; they enter into legislative enactments; they influence those who execute them; they regulate courts of justice; they spread sentiments of sympathy, tenderness, and compassion, even for the guilty, and diffuse universal love and kindness. Or is a nation still *enveloped in the delusions of Antichrist?* the word of God dispels those delusions. Bishop Jewell, on 2 Thess. ii, 8, says, "The Apostle speaks of the preaching of the Gospelwhich is mighty to do all that whereunto he appoints it, shall make his (Antichrist's) doings manifest, and let all the world see that he was not sent of God; that he did never set forth the glory of God; that he has not sought the salvation of his people; that, in matters of faith and all his life, he is adversary to Christ.—Princes make their conquests by power and strength, by fire and sword, and engines of war; but God shall beat down his adversaries with the rod of his mouth, by the true preaching of his word." Once more: *Do evils common to our fallen nature prevail in every nation?* the preaching of the Gospel suggests thoughts of mercy to provide against them all. This has filled our own happy land with charitable institutions, alleviating wo of every character, and meeting the wants of man in every variety of form that sin has introduced. What institution of this kind may not be traced to the gospel! And, very generally, the ministers of the Gospel are the first spring, the most constant supporters, the most effective advocates, and the great stay of such institutions. In short, by the full diffusion of the Gospel, war, where not prevented, is ameliorated; slavery, where not removed, is softened; the female character, instead of being degraded, is elevated; and universal peace and justice, truth and righteousness, contentment, holiness, and happiness are established and flourish.*—"Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!"

Again, *one of God's greatest curses upon a country is to remove the ministry of the Word.* If the absence of preaching be the greatest national evil, how great a blessing is it to have the constant privilege of hearing his word! The Scriptures put the national evil of not having an opportunity to hear the word in the strongest light; (Amos viii, 11, 12.) "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for a water; but of hearing the word of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north, even unto the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." Realise the case of a *famine of bread.* What distress it spreads over a country, and how it alarms and agitates every individual! In the famine of seven years, recorded in the history of Jacob, they hastened from all lands to Egypt to buy food; and Jacob, in this grievous need, was obliged to part with his beloved Benjamin. Then realise that of a *thirst for water.* What will not men do to satisfy their thirst? What distress was there in the want of rain for three years and a half in the time of Ahab? Then unite these two evils together at one time. Then, let them not only come in one particular place, but through the whole country. If one part

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*Apparent exceptions, such as the divisions of professing Christians, their eager strifes, fierce contentions, and bloody persecutions, form no just objection to this statement. Those who *live godly in Christ Jesus*, must expect, and will indeed, from the corruption of man, meet with opposition; but the principles of the Gospel dispose REAL Christians to return not *railing for railing, but contrariwise blssing*; meekness, forbearance, forgiving of injuries, fervent and universal love, endurance and not infliction of persecutions, especially mark their character. The faults of NOMINAL Christians, and the inconsistencies of any Christians, are not to be charged on Christianity, but on the want of it.

only is in want, and another has abundance, there may be relief afforded; but here the famine is general, from one end of the country to the other. Such is the figure by which the Scriptures represent the want of a preached word; and the want thus typified is manifestly the greater as the soul is more important than the body, and eternity of higher magnitude than the life now present. Isaiah shows that "the bread of adversity and the water of affliction" are far less evils than the removal of teachers from a country. Isa. xxx, 20.

It has been remarked, that "spiritual judgments are the worst, as men are senseless of them, and they are tokens of God's heaviest displeasure; and of them, the famine of the word is the most dangerous. Ignorance, blindness, hardness of heart, impenitence, and infidelity, are lamentable plagues; but by the preaching of the word, they may be removed or subdued; but, where vision fails, people must perish; for the absence of the word locks and rivets men into their sins, and the judgments of them."

The history of those on whom this threatening was denounced, illustrates these observations. Look at the Jews since they rejected the word; for nearly two thousand years, how affecting the lesson which their history teaches! Scattered over the earth, they are now "a proverb and a bye word; a nation meted out, and trodden under foot." They are enveloped in the midst of Talmudical and Rabbinical rites and superstitions. They have, it is true, the Scriptures; but there is a famine of *hearing* the word. They want living preachers, declaring scriptural truth. From the days of the Apostles till now, when God's promised time of mercy to this once favoured people seems to be arriving, we find not a faithful ministry of God's word among them. They have Jacob's well, but the stone is upon it, unrolled away, so that there is none to draw water for them from the life-giving fountain.

But not to confine our views to one example, let us regard the *general history* of the Church and of the world. We have noticed, that spiritual prosperity is greatly connected with hearing; and the important principle on which we are insisting, that those countries flourish most in *temporal prosperity*, where the Gospel is most fully preached and heard, may, we apprehend, be fully established by *facts*. To enter into this minutely, would require lengthened discussion; but the general result will be sufficiently obvious from a cursory review of the world.

Look at the kingdoms of the world, as it regards national prosperity; view the Heathen, and the Mahomedan, and Jewish world; view corrupt, decayed, and flourishing Christian churches; and you will find that nations prosper in proportion as the ministry of the word is maintained in purity and vigour. The public and constant preaching of divine truth, brings along with it, as far as it is permitted to have influence, not only right views of God and our relation to him, and pure and spiritual worship of him; but all those things which indicate national prosperity: the true principles of loyalty, freedom, and respect for those in authority, consideration for those in subjection, peace and security of property, liberty of the press, general diffusion of knowledge, progress of arts and science, and general happiness among the whole population, mark such countries. On the other hand, in idolatrous countries, cruelty, impurity, and female degradation, are distinguished features: in Mahomedan countries, pride and lust of dominion, oppression and despotism, and licentiousness prevail: in the decayed Eastern, or corrupt Roman Catholic churches, possessing the outward frame of a church, but without the shining light of preaching, you observe silly, and absurd and childish superstitions, the profanation of the Sabbath, great corruptions of morals, despotic governments, and restraints on the freedom of the subject and the liberty of the press.

A brief sketch of *the history of the Church* will confirm these views.

Unquestionably, true religion, with social happiness among those under its influence, flourished most in the apostolic age, under the immediate and full instruction of the first teachers of the Gospel. Then alone could it be said of the

whole Church, "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers,—all that believed were together, —they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people." It was the determination of the first Christian teachers, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word;" Acts vi, 4.

This happy state of the primitive Church continued (though the light shone with decreasing lustre,) for some centuries. Having already referred to this in the former chapter, and quoted the testimonies of Justin the Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Athanasius, but little need be added. They sometimes had two or three sermons preached in the same assembly, first by the Presbyters, and then by the Bishop, who usually, when present, closed the service with his paternal exhortation. In many places they preached on two or three of the week days, and in some they had sermons every day. Augustine says, "The people flock unto the Church to the pure solemnities of Christ, where both sexes are so honestly distinguished by their several places; where they may learn how to lead their temporal lives well here, to become worthy of the eternal hereafter,—there either the commandments of the true God are propounded, his miracles related, his gifts commended, or his grace implored."*

The Fathers, however, soon found it necessary to urge the work of preaching. Chrysostom, speaking of the duties of Bishops on the words *apt to teach*, says, "This is most specially required of those who have the office of governing committed to them." He elsewhere says, "St. Paul converted the world, not so much by miracles, as by his continual preaching; and therefore a bishop must be able to exhort by sound doctrine, that is, to preserve his flock and overthrow its enemies; and unless he be such a one, all is lost:" and he calls the office of a minister, "the teaching throne." Jerome says, that "a Bishop's innocent conversation without preaching, did as much harm by its silence, as it did good by its example. For the barking of the dogs is as necessary as the shepherd's staff, to terrify and beat off the wolves."*

This neglect of preaching crept into the church by degrees, speard more and more generally, and marked its declining circumstances. Sozomen relates of the church of Rome in his time, (the fifth century,) that "they had no sermons either by the bishop or any other, which was contrary to the custom at that time of all churches."†

For some centuries before the Council of Trent was held, preaching was almost wholly laid aside by the clergy. Ancient councils urged this from time to time with little success. Preaching the doctrines of the Gospel, and reading the Scriptures at large in the vernacular language, made no part of the public offices of religion. It is true, that it was still the practice to read, or rather chant some passages from the Gospels and Epistles in an almost unknown tongue. The mendicants and friars too were a sort of itinerant preachers licensed by the Pope; but the end of their teaching was not to edify the people, but to collect alms; so that, instead of hearing the doctrine of Christ, the people were amused with novelties and vanities. Matthew of Paris relates a story of the 11th century, the purport of which is to show that more souls had been sent to hell, through neglect of preaching by the whole ecclesiastical order, in that than in any former age. In the reign of Edward I. as Bishop Stillingfleet observes, "The office of preaching was sunk so low, that, in a Provincial Constitution at that time, great complaint is made of the ignorance and stupidity of the Parochial Clergy, that they rather made the people worse than better. But at that time the Preaching Friars had got that work into their hands by particular privileges, where it is well observed that they did not go to places which most needed their help, but to cities and corporations where they found

*See Augustine's "City of God," book ii, 28.

* See Bingham's Antiquities, book xiv, chap. iv, sect. 2.

† See Sozomen, lib. vii, chap. 19. This fact, though questioned, has been rather confirmed than shaken. See Bingham.

most encouragement. But what remedy was found by this Provincial Council? Truly every Parochial Priest four times a year was bound to read an explication of the Creed, Ten Commandments, the Two Precepts of Charity, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Principal Virtues, and the Seven Sacraments.—Here was all they were bound to by these Constitutions." At the Council of Trent a decree was made that Bishops and Parish Priests should preach the Gospel; see Session 5, chap. ii; and since the Reformation it has been more attended to; but Bingham shows that in the dark ages there was a period when the Bishops of Rome were not known to preach for five hundred years together; insomuch that when Pius Quintus made a sermon, it was looked on as a prodigy, and was indeed a greater rarity than the Sæculares Ludi were in old Rome.*

All history declares the barbarism, oppression, ignorance, and low state of morals among the clergy and laity which mark this period. Even Bellarmine (the most acute defender of Popery,) admits, "For some years before the Lutheran and Calvinistic heresies were published, there was not, (as contemporary authors testify,) any severity in Ecclesiastical Judications, any discipline with regard to morals, any knowledge of sacred literature, any reverence for divine things; there was not almost any religion remaining." See the quotation in Robertson's Charles V.

Indeed, among corrupt and decayed churches, outward show and pomp, and the administration of the Sacraments is all in all, and preaching is still greatly neglected; and, except discourses in honour of some favorite saints, or on some great festival, is very much disused. Bernard Gilpin in a Sermon before the Court of Edward VI. describes at some length the gross superstition and blindness still remaining among the people. He concludes the account—"All this, with much more, cometh through lack of faithful preaching, as experience trieth where godly pastors be. It cannot be much marvelled, if the simple and ignorant people, by some wicked heads and firebrands of hell be sometimes seduced to rebel against their Prince, and lawful magistrates, seeing they are never taught to know their obedience and duty to their king and sovereign, so straightly commanded in God's law." (See Gilpin's "Lives of the Reformers.) Bradford truly said of the Roman Mass,—"What thing helpeth so much Antichrist's kingdom, as does the mass? and what destroys preaching, and the kingdom of Christ on earth, more than it does?"* Doubtless, since the Reformation, those churches, such as the Gallicon, less under the dominion of the Pope, a Massilon, a Fenelon, a Bourdaloue, a Brydayne, and multitudes of others, have with perhaps unequalled eloquence and great effect, urged many of the truths of Christianity on crowded and admiring congregations. These helped to revive and maintain religion where they laboured, and do not furnish exceptions but confirmations of our leading principles, that general decay and corruption are marked by want of preaching. In the decayed churches of Abysinnia, Ludolph mentions, there are no sermons at all; but only prayers, and reading the Scriptures. A similar state of things marks the decayed Christian churches in Travancore and in Palestine. The Rev. William Jowett, the valuable missionary of the

* See b. ii. chap. iii, sect. 4.

* The Rev. D. Wilson thus describes in the present day, the Roman Catholic service at Milan, where that religion having unrestrained influence, we can best judge of its real character. "At half-past ten o'clock this morning, we went to the Cathedral....We saw the whole proceedings at High Mass—priests almost without end; incense, singing, music, processions, perpetual changes of dress; four persons with mitres, whom the people called the little bishops; a crowd of people coming in and going out, and staring around them; but not one prayer, nor one verse of Holy Scripture, intelligible to the people, not even if they knew Latin; not one word of a sermon; in short, it was nothing more, nor less, than a PAGAN SHOW."

He speaks again thus of Namur—"A city almost entirely Roman Catholic! Twenty thousand souls, and scarcely a Protestant family! Not so much as a single sermon that I could hear of in any of the parish churches throughout the day, (Sunday,) for the people of the town!"—See his Tour on the Continent.

Church Missionary Society, giving an account of his lately preaching among the Christians in Palestine, says, "I dwelt briefly on the importance of the right exercise of the Christian ministry, pointing out, that till the work of preaching is reanimated, there is no hope that these countries will be revived and raised from their present degradation, and showed that this was manifestly the calling and office of the ordained ministers of this country."

Preaching revived with the Reformation, and our principle might be illustrated at much length by historical facts, of what then took place, and what has since taken place, as true and scriptural preaching has revived or decayed through the Reformed Churches on the continent, and by the present state of those churches.*

In our own country, in the time of Henry VIII. after the Bible had been translated and printed, incumbents were directed to instruct the people by teaching them the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments in English, and by preaching to them a sermon at least once in a quarter of a year.

One of the first steps of the Reformers, in the reign of Edward VI. was to provide for constant preaching: and as from the general ignorance of the clergy, there were very few competent preachers; the book of Homilies was prepared to assist in supplying this defect, while the most efficient preachers that could be found, were sent into various parts of the kingdom. The Bishops were also enjoined to give orders to none but such as were able to preach God's word, and would labour in it. The king's council thought frequent and discreet preaching the most effective way to promote good order quiet, and good obedience.† In this way, pure and scriptural religion was spread, and the foundation laid of that established church, which has so long been a national blessing. Yet "there were so few Gospel preachers," Bucer says, "that many churches had no sermons, in five or six years or more."

Queen Mary, in the first year of her regin,* in order to suppress the Reformation, commanded all her subjects not to presume to preach, or by way of reading in churches, or other public or private places, (except in schools of the universities,) to interpret or teach any Scriptures, or any manner of points of doctrine concerning religion, without special licence. An instructive supplication sent by the Norfolk and Suffolk men to the Queen's Commissioners, asking them, among other things, to render God's word again to the churches, and to permit its free enjoyments, shows how in the time of the greatest trial to the country, the principles of the Gospel maintain loyalty. One extract only can be quoted, though the whole is worthy of careful perusal. "We profess before God, we think if the holy word of God had not taken some root among us, we could not in times past, have done that poor duty of ours, which was done in assisting the Queen. It was our bounden duty, and we thank God for the knowledge of his word and grace, that we then did some part of our bounden duty."†

Queen Elizabeth, in the beginning of her reign, for political reasons, forbade preaching without licence, for a short time, but subsequently much was done in her reign to promote the constant preaching of the word. "We send teachers," says Dr. Haddon, "to all the coasts and corners of our country to instruct the people." The Roman Catholics were against this.‡ They said "it was never a good world since the word of God came abroad." Still the Country was but inadequately supplied. Archbishop Sandys, (see Sermons, page 213) thus spoke of the need of preachers: "The mother city of the realm is reasonably furnished with faithful preachers: certain other cities, not many in number,

* Mr. Rose gives a very affecting view of the sad departure from the truth of many in Germany.—See his "State of the Protestant Religion in Germany.

† See Strype's Memorials, vol. ii, part i, page 262.

* See the inhibition at length in Fox's Martyrs.

† See the Supplication in Fox's Martyrs.

‡ See Strype's Annals, vol. i. part. i. ch. 13.

are blessed too, though not in like sort. But the silly people of the land otherwhere, especially in the north parts, pine away and perish, for want of this saving food. Many there are that hear not a sermon in seven years, I might safely say seventeen."

Archbishop Grindal perceiving the ignorance of the clergy, and the great need of more frequent preaching for the instruction of the people, encouraged exercises in preaching in large towns. He was deeply afflicted when the queen forbade this, and sent her an admirable letter, which is printed in Strype's Life of Grindal. The whole letter is well worthy of attention: the following passages are extracted, as tending to illustrate and confirm the principles on which we are now insisting.—"Public and continual preaching of God's word, is the ordinary mean and instrument of the salvation of mankind. St. Paul calleth it *the ministry of reconciliation* of man unto God. By preaching of God's word, the glory of God is enlarged, faith is nourished, and charity is increased. By it the ignorant is instructed, the negligent exhorted and incited, the stubborn rebuked, the weak conscience comforted, and to all those that sin of malicious wickedness, the wrath of God is threatened. By preaching also, due obedience to Christian princes and magistrates is planted in the hearts of subjects; for obedience proceedeth of conscience; conscience is grounded on the word of God; the word of God worketh his effect by preaching. So as generally where preaching wanteth, obedience faileth."

The Archbishop illustrates this by facts that had then taken place, as follows. "No Prince ever had more lively experience hereof, than your Majesty hath had in your time, and may have daily. If your Majesty come to the city of London never so often, what gratulation, what joy, what concurse of people is there to be seen? yea, what acclamations and prayers to God for your long life, and other manifest significations of inward and unfeigned love, joined with most humble and hearty obedience, are there to be heard? Whereof cometh this, Madam, but of the continual preaching of God's word in that city? whereby that people hath been plentifully instructed in their duty towards God, and your Majesty? On the contrary, what bred the rebellion in the North? Was is not Papistry, and ignorance of God's word through want of often preaching? And in the time of that rebellion, were not all men of all estates that made profession of the Gospel, most ready to offer their lives for your defence; insomuch that one poor parish in Yorkshire, which by continual preaching had been better instructed than the rest, (Halifax I mean,) was ready to bring three or four thousand able men into the field to serve you against the said rebels? How can your Majesty have a more lively trial and experience of the contrary effects of much preaching, and of little or no preaching? The one working most faithful obedience, and the other most unnatural disobedience and rebellion."

He adds the following striking remarks on the difference between preaching and reading the Homilies. "The reading of the Homilies has its commodity, but is nothing comparable to the office of preaching. The godly preacher is termed in Scripture a faithful servant, who knoweth how to give his Lord's family their apportioned feed in season; who can apply his speech to the diversity of times, places, and hearers, which cannot be done in homilies; exhortations, reprehensions, and persuasions, are uttered with more affection to the moving of the hearers in sermons, than in homiles. Besides, homilies were devised by the godly bishops in your brother's time, only to supply necessity for want of preachers; and are by the statute not to be preferred, but to give place to sermons whensoever they may be had."

The Reformers in general felt, as has been pointed out, that loyalty and obedience are maintained by faithful preaching; yet it should be fully allowed that it is only *divine truth* that is really beneficial. Wherever preaching becomes different to the general spirit and strain of the word of God, either in excessive, deficient, or erroneous exhibition of doctrine or practice, or by lowering divine into human authority and statement, or

by extravagant or careless modes of delivery; wherever it becomes political and time serving, *there*, there is a proportionate failure of success. We might show how abundantly this was exemplified in the reigns of James I. the two Charles', and in the Commonwealth, and among the Protestant Churches in general.

Civil liberty is equally advanced by scriptural doctrine. When James II. sought to bring in Popery, the clergy began to preach against that *mystery of iniquity*, (2 Thess. ii, 7,) and the divine blessing on a general diffusion of scriptural knowledge among all denominations made his attempt impracticable. Indeed the preachers of that era have left in their writings a bulwark against all future encroachments. The speaker Onslow's remarks on James II. are worthy of observation—"He loved and aimed at absolute power, and believed that nothing could introduce and support it but the Catholic Religion, as the Romanists call theirs; and this increased his zeal for it, and that zeal increased his disposition to arbitrary power: so that, in truth, his religion and politics were partly the cause of each other, and indeed they cannot easily be separated. The Protestant Faith is founded on inquiry and knowledge, the Popish on submission and ignorance. And nothing leads more to slavery in the state than blind obedience in matters of religion; as nothing tends more to civil liberty than that spirit of free inquiry which is the life of Protestantism." (See Burnet's History of his own Times.)

In farther confirmation of these things, we may appeal to the present state of our own country. We would do this with a deep sense of our national sinfulness. Who can but sigh at the abominations of the land in which we dwell, aggravated by our immense spiritual privileges! Who can but sigh at the open profanation of the Sabbath in many of our cities and villages; at the forty five thousand copies of Sunday Newspapers issuing from the press; at avowed infidelity; at the allowance of slavery in our colonies; at the spirit of pride, extravagance, luxury, pomp, and dissipation, among all ranks and classes; at our covetousness, marked in the general and eager pursuit of wealth; at the contempt of authority manifested in our public journals; the spirit of commercial gambling; and the swearing, licentiousness, and profligacy witnessed in our streets! If we are blessed beyond others, it may be well said to us, "Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiffnecked people." Deut. ix, 6. The whole history of our country abundantly shows that our present prosperity is not from any superior excellence in Britons beyond others. All who have marked with a Christian eye, how that extended empire which we now enjoy has been bestowed, will cordially say of the posessors of this empire, "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them." Ps. xliv, 3.

This we fully admit and assert, and the want of full religious instruction, with the neglect of what we have, will account for it all. Yet we judge of the state of a country in some measure by contrasting it with other countries, and God bestows national benefits in connection with ordinary means; and the preaching of the Gospel is, as we have seen, one great means of national prosperity. View then the present state of our country in this connection. How immense our spiritual privileges! Perhaps in no country in the world is the Gospel so fully declared as in this, at this day. If we look at the millions of copies of religious publications which are diffused in every part; at the thousands of schools where the Bible is read; at the weekly recurrence of our scriptural liturgy, full of the word of God; and at the tens of thousands of ministers in various ways constantly publicly preaching, and compare this with other countries, we must be convinced that here especially, the word of the Lord has free course. Connect, then, all this general and public diffusion of religious knowledge with the fact, that never, perhaps,

was England, on the whole, notwithstanding trials which our sins justly merit, in a state of greater temporal and spiritual prosperity. In no country, perhaps, is real religion more honoured, the tone of morals more high, the spirit of benevolence more extensive, and general integrity of character more maintained. It possesses unparalleled commerce, influence, and dominion, extended almost over the habitable globe; and, wherever it goes, something (though, alas! far too little, and with many drawbacks as it respects men, who dishonour their name as Christians) of the ameliorating spirit of its religion, and its laws, and its institutions, is also imparted to the various countries under its sway. We would not undervalue any secondary cause that may have contributed to this, such as the wisdom of our statesmen, the valour of our armies and our fleets, the skill of our artificers, the enterprize of our merchants, and the energy of our character; but all these come from the blessing of God, and under some influence of that religion, proclaimed so freely among us, which elevates man above little, mean, selfish, and personal interest, to those considerations which affect the general good of the whole country. The connection of spiritual and temporal prosperity in England is obvious. At the time when the Gospel of Christ is very fully preached at home, and the greatest efforts are made to send it abroad; at this very time our country is blessed with great national happiness and prosperity.* The general diffusion of the spirit of the Gospel has carried us safely through many a trying crisis, and has made many a storm only instrumental to our good. Other countries have gone through similar events; but for the want of our spiritual privileges, the people had not that moral elevation of character, which would have made them sacrifice pride, ambition, personal aggrandizement, and every selfish and carnal project for the general good. France and Spain have had their storms and revolutions; but they had not the ameliorating spirit of the Gospel diffused through the whole community, and they have received little good. It is the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, accompanied by the efficacy of divine grace, which has made England the envy and the admiration of the world; which led us, in the most bitter wars, to the most kindly acts, even to the enemies with whom we contended; and which still leads us, wherever we hear of distress, there to feel a brother's sympathy, and to stretch forth the hand of glad and liberal relief. The Gospel makes England the Benefactor of the human race, the Storehouse of means and blessings for mankind, and the Missionary of the world.

The same efficacy of the Gospel is seen, wherever it is fully proclaimed. In those heathen countries where the missionaries have been able publicly and extensively to preach the word of God in the respective tongues of each nation, there has the divine blessing been abundantly bestowed. We undervalue not other means, especially schools, and the printing press; but the preached Gospel is the great means, and the great blessing is where that means is in full operation.*

* The heavy commercial difficulties, with the consequent extensive distress which came upon our country in the close of 1825, and the beginning of 1826, do not materially affect the general view above given, and suggest important practical lessons. When we look at our national sins; when we remember how much God has been forgotten, and public credit has been idolized; when we remember our extravagant spirit of almost unbounded speculation, and how much the cause of Christ has been disregarded by many among the great men of our country, and by many among our merchants; need we be surprised that God should show us the emptiness of that in which the world confides, and punish us by the failure of that in which we boasted? O may the skirts of the storm which has fallen upon us, show those who were forgetting him, how entirely they are in his hands, and lead us as a nation to a much higher degree of religion. May all who have power and influence hear the solemn and suitable admonition of the Psalmist—"Be wise now therefore, O ye kings! be instructed, ye judges of the earth! serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."

* A missionary who has laboured for several years among the Heathen, observes, "The kingdom of Satan, I am convinced, will never be shaken to the ground, till Missionaries become preachers of the word: till they place their hope of success on the public preaching of

We see this in Polynesia, in West Africa, and in the West Indies. In other stations where missionaries have been more recently established, and the languages had to be acquired, and the heathen have not therefore been able to say, "We hear every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born, the wonderful works of God," there has been comparatively little progress; so that we may say, "Tell us how far the word of God is diffused and received, and we will tell you how far true religion with all its beneficial effects succeeds." The first gift of the Holy Spirit, was to enable the first teachers to speak in other tongues; and the first use of that gift was to preach the Gospel.

We would however fully, again and again, allow and assert that whatever moral and civilizing benefits may arise, little or nothing, and in some cases worse than nothing, as it regard spiritual benefit, results from the words of men who occupy the pulpit without declaring, or without feeling themselves, the great truths of Christianity.* It is only the divinely appointed, the grand and unadulterated, the pure and sublime doctrine of free salvation by a crucified Redeemer, wisely and faithfully preached by men who feel its power, and live under its influence, that is made fully efficacious, through the divine blessing, to the results which have been stated.

History then fully confirms the general principles of this chapter, and the word of God is clear on the subject. Let one passage suffice, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtles tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Isa. lv, 10—13.

The subject is of great practical importance. We may learn from it one of the most valuable means of benefitting our fellow-creatures. Here is the moral lever which removes the load that oppresses the world. Here is the secret spring that sets the whole machinery of national prosperity in regular and beneficial motion. Do we wish to advance our country yet higher in the scale of moral excellence? Do we wish to benefit our sister island? let us aid every wise plan for promoting the preaching of the Gospel; let us throw our whole influence to increase religious instruction, to circulate religious works, to multiply faithful ministers, and to advance the building of churches, and look in fervent prayer to the Lord of the harvest, who invites and commands us to pray to him to send forth labourers. Do we wish to promote the welfare of the whole earth? let us aid, as widely as we can, the diffusion of divine truth. It will be a blessed leaven that will spread itself with a

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the Gospel, knowing that the word is mighty through God to the pulling down of all the strongest holds of the Devil. Had I a son going forth as a missionary to the heathen, my advice to him should be—"My Son, meditate on the word; pray and preach; show all kindness to all men for their benefit; but let nothing divert you from the one work of preaching the Gospel.'" He observes, that education of children, translation of Scriptures, circulation of tracts, &c. are blessed works; but if the missionary engages deeply in them, his heart will be turned from his main office, and though he may occasionally preach, he will cease to view it as the great appointed means of saving sinners.

* The Reformers felt the importance of this distinction: Tindal, one of the first translators, of the Scriptures into our own language, says, "Where the word of God is preached purely, and received into the heart, there is faith, the Spirit of God, and there are also good works of necessity, wheresoever occasion is given. Where God's word is not purely preached, but men's dreams, traditions, imaginations, inventions, ceremonies, and supersitition, there is no faith, and consequently no spirit that cometh from God; and where God's spirit is not, there can be no good works, even as where an apple tree is not, there can grow no apples, but there is unbelief, the Devil's spirit, and evil works." See Fathers of the Church, vol. i. page 59.

powerful and penetrating, with a pervading and beneficial influence in every land, every city, every village, and every family, till the whole earth be leavened.

But there is a yet higher and more important benefit, not merely affecting us as creatures of a day, or as members of nations, which must all end with this world; but affecting our state through eternity. We will consider this in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

Preaching the Word the Special Ordinance of God for the Salvation of his People and the manifestation of those who are lost.

The most important aspect in which we can regard the ministry of the word is, that it is the grand appointed means for the salvation of man. It is valuable as promoting the happiness of nations and the present welfare of man; but its highest commendation is, that it is the means which God usually blesses to our salvation. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. i, 21. This being a point of such immense moment, and very often asserted in the Holy Scriptures, it will be profitable to consider it at some length.

When our Lord first gave the commission *to preach the Gospel to every creature*, he added this all-important sanction, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned:" Mark xvi, 16. The circumstances in which these words were spoken are such as greatly to increase their importance. The Lord of life and glory had gone through the scene of his humiliation, and had finished that work of redemption which he came to accomplish. He had overcome the sharpness of death; he had risen from the grave; and having thus obtained an eternal salvation for ruined sinners, he appeared for the last time to his followers. His beloved disciples, filled with love, and reverence, and admiration, hung round about him. He led them out to Bethany, and the last charge which he gave them before he ascended to his original glory, was the commission just mentioned—a commission, important in every point of view; but especially important as comprising the appointed means for conveying to the human race the vast blessings which the Son of God came into the world to obtain.

The words which our Lord uses in his last commission given to his Apostles, evidently imply that preaching is God's special ordinance for salvation. The Apostles show this at length in various parts of the Epistles. (See Rom. x; 1 Cor. i, 3.) St. Paul says the Gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." Rom. i, 16. After the general statement, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," (Rom. x, 14,) the Apostle proceeds, with a course of questions which fully show that hearing is the great mean appointed of God for obtaining those graces which are connected with our salvation—"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" See how inseparably he links together salvation, praying, believing, hearing, preaching, and sending. He, who says, Believe that thou mayest be saved, says also, Hear, that thou mayest believe. We have no warrant to expect salvation in any other way. Hearing is then God's appointment; it is his special ordinance for communicating faith, and all its blessed results. Its effect depends not on the perfection or imperfection, the meanness or dignity, the degree, or gift of grace in the minister. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, (men doubtless of very different talents and graces,) or the very weakest of the Apostles, preached, they were, after all, but Ministers; instruments "by whom," or by whose instrumentality, "men believed;" their efficiency was in the appointment, their success was in the ordinance, as instituted and ordained by God for the special purpose of conveying grace to

the hearer. Preaching as a constituted means of grace can alone prosper: the benefit depends not on the minister, but on God's blessing on the means, and on that faith in the hearer which applies the word in power; for the word preached did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. One reason, probably, that the sermons of the most accomplished ministers produce so little comparative effect is, because men expect more from the minister, than from the power of God's Spirit, blessing the ordinance as a means of grace to their souls.

It is not however every sort of preaching, but preaching the Gospel, *the Gospel of peace—glad tidings of good things*, (Rom. x, 15,)—*Christ crucified—Christ Jesus, who of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, (1 Cor. i, 23 30,) that is the means appointed for conveying to man the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the graces and blessings of the Christian dispensation.

We will first state the distinguishing feature of that preaching which God blesses; and then show that a rejection of it leaves men undone, and a reception of it is inseparably connected with salvation.

It is evident from various passages of Holy Scripture, that the great subject of the ministry of the Apostles was Christ crucified for our sins. They speak of this as the prominent subject and characteristic feature of their ministry. "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." 1 Cor. ii, 2. "I delivered unto you, *first of all*, that which I also received, how Christ died for our sins." 1 Cor. xv, 3. "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Acts v, 42. "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead." Acts xvii, 2, 3. He counted it his great office as well as honour "to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Eph. iii, 8.

No preaching then is Apostolic, in which Christ Jesus—his cross and resurrection—his grace and his glory, are not prominent.—The doctrines which the Apostles preached are called *the preaching of the cross:* (1 Cor. i, 18,) the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, his death on the cross for the sins of the world. O that this ever were, O that this may ever be, the grand and distinguishing feature of the discourses of all that minister in holy things. Nothing else is the scriptural way of preaching—nothing else is blessed of God.

The Apostles preached *Christ crucified as the leading truth of Christianity.* The atonement for sin made by his death was their glory. "God forbid," says St. Paul, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Gal. vi, 14. It is evidently that remarkable and astonishing fact which eminently distinguishes Christianity from all other systems of religion whatsoever.

Look at the character and glory of Him who died. It is not merely man, nor an angel of light, nor a creature even of the highest excellence. It is the Creator of every creature—the Lord from heaven—the Son of God. He is over all, God blessed for ever. He "in the beginning was with God, and was God." He is called "the great, the mighty, the true God; Jehovah; by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made."

This glorious God *was manifested in the flesh.* God sent "his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin." Rom. viii. "He, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God—made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. ii, 7. He became a little child, was subject to his parents, lived many years in the world, laboured at his reputed father's business, and appeared as a *man of sorrows.* The Lord of all worlds so humbled himself, that on earth *he had not where to lay his head;* and He, a patient sufferer, was opposed, persecuted, mocked, ridiculed, and spit upon, by his

own creatures. He underwent the extremest agony of body and soul. He sweat great drops of blood in that suffering. He was tried, condemned, and crucified, by his own people, even those whom he came to save.

These facts are declared in the Bible; and surely, such facts are the most astonishing and stupendous that the mind of man can possibly contemplate. They are more deeply impressive to us, as we have the most intense interest in them. We are assured that *he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;* and that "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." What truths then can possibly be of greater moment to sinful creatures? Without this hope, we might lie down in despair under the burden of our sin, guilt, and misery; and the dread of eternal wrath, from a justly offended Creator.

We are also assured, that through death, Christ, our Lord, overcame Satan, our chief adversary, and vanquished every other spiritual enemy. He made the conquest at the very time that he seemed conquered. And now he lives for evermore the Saviour of sinners. He thus describes himself,—"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore! Amen; and have the keys of death and hell." Rev. i, 18. He rose from the grave a triumphant conqueror, and is now seated at the right hand of God, the Redeemer, Deliverer, and Intercessor of his people, even of all them that trust in him.

Such is the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer. It is the centre of all other truths. They all flow from this, they all cling to this, and hang round this; it is the support and stay, and illustration of every other revealed truth. Hence we may observe, that whatever *other doctrines* the Apostles preached, *they taught them in direct connection with this leading truth;* and on whatever duties they insisted, it is from this they lead us to discharge them. Do they declare the love of God? it is from this topic it derives its brightest evidence—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." Do they exhibit his justice? this *propitiation* is *set forth* to show that *God is just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* Do they urge dedication to God? here is its main spring; "ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are his." Do they seek to comfort Christians? they tell us, "in that Christ himself suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted; he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities." Do they endeavour to alarm and awaken the careless? it is by this appeal, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!" Are we taught to be humble, and to give place to others? here is the motive—"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many." Are we instructed how to discharge relative duties? it is still from the same doctrine—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it."

These instances will sufficiently show that the doctrine of the death of Chirst for sin, is the leading truth of Christianity; that which is specially insisted on by its first teachers; and that which is eminently the ordinance of God for the salvation of men. It was not the preaching *with enticing words of man's wisdom*, that was accompanied by the Holy Spirit; but the preaching of *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, came to the Corinthian converts *in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, so that their faith stood *in the power of God.* 1 Cor. ii, 4, 5. The Gospel is eminently the ministration of the spirit. 2 Cor. iii, 8. When the love of God, our Heavenly father, as especially manifested in the atonement of Christ, and the work of his Spirit, is held forth prominently; when free justification by divine grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and sanctification by his spirit are clearly and explicitly displayed; then God gives testimony to the word of his grace in the conversion and edification of sinners; then he pours out his Holy Spirit, and revives and refreshes his church.

You have here, then, Christian Reader,

a test of that which is the true Gospel of Christ. Wherever Christ is not exhibited as the principal subject of the sermon, or other truths are preached without any connection with this leading truth, there, there is not the pure light of Christianity. O, then, pray for your ministers, that they may know more of Christ themselves, and preach him more simply and fully, as the only hope of fallen man. While his redemption exhibits the brightest displays of God's perfections, and the most quickening motives to obedience; it is the very doctrine by which it pleases God to save precious and immortal souls.

Perhaps some ministers may have laboured diligently and conscientiously according to their knowledge for many years, and have seen little fruit of their labours in turning sinners from the error of their ways; in such a case, it becomes them seriously to enquire, whether they have fully exhibited a crucified Saviour, as the only and sovereign remedy for our spiritual maladies, and the only medium of return to God.

This doctrine is effective of the most important results. It has two very important, but very different and opposite effects. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." Those who are lost, reject it as folly. Those who are saved, receive it as the power of God.

A rejection of the Gospel *leaves men undone. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* They reject the gratuitous pardon, and the free salvation which the Sovereign of all worlds sets before them. Through their wilful blindness, and sinful perverseness, they see not any wisdom or excellence in salvation, by a crucified Redeemer. It may be very profitable to consider some of the grounds on which different characters reject the great appointed means of salvation, so that it becomes to them, not a *savour of life unto life*, but *a savour of death unto death.* There are *the wise* and *learned* of this world, like the philosophers of old; who, because they know arts and sciences better than others, or are acquainted with learned languages, and understand rules of criticism, instead of using these talents, as they might be used, for the better understanding of the truth, are puffed up with pride, and a conceit of their own superior wisdom; will not comprehend the doctrine of the cross, and disdain to come with others as poor perishing sinners, guilty, condemned, and undone, for a free salvation. This doctrine was *foolishness to the Greek* formerly, and it is, alas! too evident, that it is still foolishness to many who have genius, and talent, and learning, and every thing, but a heart subjected to the mind and will of God. Therefore God leaves them to their own wisdom, and they cannot find that way of life, which a wayfaring man, though a fool, does not mistake. O let us pray to be delivered from the pride of fancied knowledge, and ask for the simplicity of a little child, in receiving the doctrines of the Gospel. Not that true philosophy and science are to be despised; they render service to religion, when under its governing influence; but they do not ordinarily prepare for its reception. The philosophers of old were not the first to receive the Gospel; and when they did receive it, they soon sought to deteriorate it by human mixtures; and philosophers in the present day have often acted a similar part; "*if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise.*" 1 Cor. iii, 18. That wisdom of God which philosophers have rejected, multitudes of the poor and ignorant have gladly received, and have become wise unto salvation. The self-righteous count this foolishness, as the Pharisees of old did. These will not part with their fancied worthiness. They trust in their regular, moral, decent, and sober life. Nothing is more contrary to their state of mind, than to be called on to renounce all hope in any goodness or merit of their own, and to descend on a level with the vilest sinner, as to justification before God, and build every hope on free and unmerited grace, through a crucified Lord. Hence they exclaim against it, as opening the flood-gates of sin, and count nothing too severe to say against those who maintain this doctrine. The lover of the world thinks the doctrine of the cross to be foolishness. That doc-

trine proclaims the immense value of spiritual things, and the vanity of all worldly things. While it shows that the favour of God is better than life itself, it at the same time declares that "*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, shall pass away.*" Hence it disturbs him in the pursuit of his worldly plans. It is incompatible with his favourite objects. He cannot, if he receives it, follow his covetous desires, his proud inclinations, or his vain pleasures; but must yield himself to the service of God, as the one thing of supreme importance. The antinomian, too, though he may boast of his regard to the cross, and despise others, and think that it will allow him to live as he pleases, and gratify his sinful appetites; yet, after all, the true doctrine of the cross is foolishness to him also. He discerns not its practical tendency. He shrinks from the real cross. He marks not the corresponding obligations to take up our cross, deny ourselves, and follow Christ. He cannot really enter into the force of the Apostle's words, *I am crucified with Christ.*

Thus in various and opposite ways, men, from the love of sin, forming a wrong estimate of the Gospel, reject the only way of salvation, and refuse to submit to Almighty God. May every reader examine his own heart, and compare his present state with that described in the word of God: and in doing so, may the blessed Spirit discover to each of us our real character, and lead us to a true, a more cordial, and an entire reception of the Gospel. It is not a small matter, or a trifling evil, to count such a salvation folly. It is attended with a most awful and tremendous ruin. They that count it foolishness *perish.*

God seems to have made this method of salvation the means of more strikingly manifesting the characters of ungodly men, as well as of conveying his grace to his people. He calls here for the unqualified submission of our understanding and our affections to his revealed will. Those who love their sins, those who are covetous, proud, sensual, and ambitious, and will not see the evil of their course, nor part with their iniquities, presumptuously arraign *the wisdom of God*, and perish for ever. They remain in that original ruin from which the Gospel reveals the only way of escape. Refusing that way, the sentence of condemnation remains unrepealed. *He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.* But they perish also with an aggravated ruin—"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God—it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

O what a ruin is this! Who can consider it aright, without being ready to weep day and night for such souls as might escape it, and will not! To be lost, and that for ever! What words can describe the unutterable wo. All peace and all joy, all goodness and all happiness, lost, for ever lost! The society of the Redeemed, the company of angels, the presence and knowledge of Him who is the source of all blessedness—the benignant Father of mercies and God of all comfort, the gracious Saviour, the full Comforter of his people: these with all the bliss and glory of heaven's eternal mansions, lost, for ever lost! Then, in the place of these, the fire that never can be quenched, the worm that never dies, perpetual wickedness, incessant disquietude, the torturing and never ceasing anguish of guilt, the perpetual presence of accursed fiends, this inexpressible and exhaustless misery to be endured, even for ever! O rejecter of the Gospel, whoever you be, surely our hearts are hard, and our faith is weak, and we have not the due feelings of human sympathy or rivers of tears would ever be running down our eyes for you: like David we should be horribly afraid for you; like all the Prophets, like the holy Apostles, like the beloved Son of God, we should constantly be warning you, we should, with all possible earnestness, exhort you, we should tenderly and affectionately beseech you, to *flee from the wrath to come!*

There will be this galling and torturing reflection, added to the other agonies of perdition—a way of escape was provided, was proclaimed, and was proposed to them; but they counted that very way

in which the wisdom of God is most wonderfully displayed to the highest intelligencies and the brightest seraphs above—they counted it, (O sad effect of the madness of the fallen heart, and the inexpressible delusion of Satan, putting darkness for light and light for darkness, calling good evil, and evil good)—they counted it foolishness! they even, trusting in their own lie, spurned it from them with the utmost contempt, proudly preferred their own vain imaginations, and chose their own device, leading them to eternal destruction. O, does any reader of these lines now mock and despise the humble believer, and count his life madness? let him pause and consider the Bible account of the end of such a course. It may be, it must be, it is, true. Are you then desirous of aggravating your own wo? Are you willing to be miserable for ever for the sake of a little fancied temporal advantage? The word of God cannot deceive you; his book makes it palpably plain that they who hear not the words of Christ shall perish for ever. They shall remain a lasting spectacle to the world, to angels, and men; a monument to all God's creatures, of the stupendous and unutterable folly of departing from God, and of his strict and perfect, his eternal and awful truth and justice. Is it possible that one who reads these pages may endure that wrath of which they bring testimony from God's holy word? O may the writer and every reader dilligently look that they fail not of the grace of God, and that they be not at the last numbered among the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction! If you have trifled hitherto, trifle no longer. Read your Bible with fervent prayer, earnestly imploring the influences of the Holy Spirit, and thus acting, never shall you be left to count the Gospel foolishness, and so to perish for ever.

If I have dwelt longer on this than the subject of the chapter required, let the inconceivable importance be a sufficient apology.

But, blessed be God, there is another far different and an infinitely happy effect produced by the Gospel. It is that system of doctrine which God blesses to the salvation of those that hear and receive it.

To avoid some mistakes, it may be necessary to show more particularly how hearing aright promotes our eternal salvation. It does not save our souls by any merit of man's in so hearing. It is rather our mercy and privilege that we hear the faithful preaching of his Gospel, and that he gives us suitable dispositions. Nor is there any necessary connection between using the means of grace and obtaining the glory of God; there is a gracious but not a necessary connection, for many have the outward means, who never obtain the ultimate blessing which those means are designed to impart.

Hearing the word aright then, is one of those means appointed by a heavenly Father, in infinite mercy, in the due use of which he will communicate to us the gifts of wisdom, faith, repentance, and all those graces which mark a saved state here, and prepare us for eternal bliss hereafter. A faithful ministry clearly reveals the way of salvation, and brings it plainly before us, and God makes it a saving blessing to his people, as St. Paul shows—*the righteousness which is of faith* saith, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved." He then asks, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

This happy effect of hearing begins in, and is marked by, quite an opposite estimate of the Gospel to that which we have already considered. What the men of this world regard as an unintelligible doctrine, as folly and absurdity, is to the humble Christian an exhibition of the stupendous power and unsearchable wisdom of Almighty God. The creation of the world displayed his power; but the redemption and recovery of a ruined world—the restoration of offending creatures—the pardon of guilty rebels by the Holy God, and their obtaining the favour of a Just, Righteous, and Eternal Being—here was a work to which nothing was equal but infinite wisdom and almighty power! The change of a corrupt and polluted heart, the daily victory

over sin and Satan, the coming out and being separate from a world lying in wickedness, for this nothing is effective but the Gospel, by which, through his Spirit, God works in us and strengthens us. It is by this channel that the Holy Spirit, the fountain of spiritual life, and the earnest of future glory, is, though not necessarily and invariably, yet most generally conveyed to man. Thus it is specially the ordinance of God for our salvation.

The effects of the Gospel manifest that it is indeed the power of God. View Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of the Lord, riding to Damascus in all the rage of a cruel persecutor. He hears the voice of the Gospel, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest!* at once the tempest is stilled; the lion becomes a lamb; he asks, *What wilt thou have me to do?* View the Jailer at Philippi, after Paul and Silas had received many stripes, cruelly neglecting their wounds, thrusting them into the inner prison, and making their feet fast in the stocks. No sooner does he hear the voice of the Gospel, than, the same hour of the night, he takes them, washes their stripes, brings them into his house, sets meat before them, and rejoices, believing, with all his house. The personal experience of every Christian gives him individual proof of the same power. Those who have felt their imminent danger through sin, and that they have been on the very brink of a never-ending ruin, and could not save themselves, will readily acknowledge the wonders of that wisdom and power which provided a way of escape. Those who were once covetous, sensual, proud, earthly-minded, and those who have gone still farther in iniquity, and were perhaps once drunkards, swearers, sabbath-breakers, or fornicators; such, when converted, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, can, from their own experience, testify that the Gospel is the power of God.

And wherever such a change is effected, there is salvation begun—there is a blessed token and pledge of future glory. If, Christian reader, you are trusting only in a crucified Saviour; if you see the excellence and blessedness of his Gospel; if you have felt its efficacy in turning you from your sins, you have in these things cheering and delightful evidences that the Gospel has been to you an ordinance for your salvation; that you are among the saved; that you were chosen in Christ; that you are born of God, sanctified by his Spirit, upheld by his power, and that you shall be brought to his glory.

And who can fully declare the value of this salvation. Even in this life, to have a relief from the guilt and burden of sin; to have sufficient strength afforded us against the power of the enemy; to have the spirit of adoption and the hope of glory, may well gladden the heart in the midst of the greatest temporal sorrows. But eternity, though it will more fully discover the value of this salvation, will never exhaust it. O Christian reader! to be among the saved at last; to lie in Abraham's bosom; to associate ever with the spirits of just men made perfect; to be free from all sin, and free to all holiness; to be without any curse, pain, or sorrow; and to be so filled with every blessing as to have, in the expressive language of Scripture, *fulness of joy;* to see Jesus and ever be with him; to behold God as he is, and know as we are known; boundless, unutterable, ever-enduring, and unalloyed bliss: this is the salvation which God has connected with the faithful preaching and due reception of Christ's word! O Christian reader, that you and the writer may thus be blessed! Is it not a delightful thought that there are those now living on earth who shall in heavenly glory sing the song, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!" Let us, above all things, seek to be numbered with them; let us pray with David, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people."

The practical improvement of this doctrine is obvious and important. The effect which the Gospel has upon you, should be *a means of discovering to you your own character.* In a world like

this, where our own hearts are very deceitful, where Satan strives to blind us, and all around is calculated to mislead us, it is of the greatest moment to us, to have our real character laid open and shown to us. Now we have, in the way in which we view the Gospel, a test and touchstone of divine nature, by which we may ascertain our state—"we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God and the wisdom of God." Let us then enquire, most seriously and most anxiously, as a matter that concerns our eternal welfare, in what way we view the Gospel: if it be a stumbling-block, or foolishness, we are among the lost. If we receive it, on the other hand, as the wisdom of God, and his power has been manifested towards us through it in changing and renewing us, this may give us an assured hope that our character is that of a real disciple of Christ. Let us try and search hereby whose we are and what we are.

We may also learn *not to judge of the Gospel by the opinion of worldly men.* True it is that they may be very wise in the things of this world; replenished with literature, genius, and talents; acute, sensible, and shrewd in worldly things; and with all this they may count the Gospel plan of salvation foolishness. But let this guard us against so great a snare; the Bible says it is foolishness to them that perish. Will you abide by the opinion of those who shall in the great day of judgment be condemned of God and perish for ever? O no! you can have no wish to follow them to eternal ruin. Let this consideration break the snare which the false judgment of man may spread around you. Who would, with an intelligent mind, in the very face of Scripture, despise the Gospel, at the price of eternal ruin, because it may be lightly thought of by any human being? Christian reader! the more the wise of this world despise, ridicule and oppose the Gospel, the dearer let it be to your heart, and the more boldly do you confess it before men.

Never be content till you *experience the saving power of the Gospel.* As, if you slight and despise the Gospel, you may here see written as with a sun beam, your imminent danger, and discover your final doom in words so obvious that they cannot be mistaken; so you may, on the other, discover the appointed method of salvation. Are preaching, hearing, faith, prayer, and salvation, graciously linked together as means and result; Rom. x, 13—15. as God's plan for bringing his sons to glory? value then the words of salvation; let the doctrine of the cross be very precious in your estimation. Meditate on these things. Is hearing the great means appointed of God for recovering our souls from that state of spiritual death and ruin, that alienation and separation from God in which we are lying by nature, and restoring us to life and favour and communion with God? we should use this means for this end. Are you unconverted? come, looking that the very next sermon may be God's opportunity for your conversion. Are you cold, and lukewarm? attend on his preached word that you may be warmed and enlivened. Are you in a worldly state of mind? go to hear, that your affections may be set on heavenly things. Are you strong in the Lord? still go for that which you still need, the increase of faith, hope, and love. Expect much in the way of God's institution, and you shall not be disappointed. We look too much at the circumstances, and too little at the practical end of the ministry. Let our end and main business be spiritual profit, and to be nourished unto eternal life. Pray for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and so shall the preached Gospel become powerful efficacious to produce in you faith, and final salvation. And, lest any should be too much discouraged by a fear that because they have hitherto slighted the word, they are already lost, we would add the encouraging remarks, that often where the word has been little attended to at first, (as at Corinth, Acts xviii.) it has been subsequently gladly received. Bishop Jewell says, "God knoweth whom he will bring to be of his fold, and make to hear his voice. Many times he blesseth his word with great increase among them, which a

the first despise it, and entreat cruelly the preachers and messengers thereof." But when the word has not been efficacious, take care that you do not blame God, or his word, or his ordinances, but your own unbelief, (Heb. iv, 2.) and want of upright walking. Micah ii, 7.

Let us be *grateful to God, if we have found the Gospel of Christ the power of God to our salvation.* O how should our hearts be impressed with a sense of his benefits to whom we owe all, and who has bought us at the price of the blood of his dear Son! how should we value that means which he has appointed for conveying his blessings! Let us embrace it more simply and more fully, and adorn it more fully.

CHAPTER IV.

The Presence of Christ the Glory of Christian Assemblies.

It was a remarkable appeal that Solomon made in his affecting prayer at the dedication of the temple—"Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold! the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less the house that I have builded!" 1 Kings viii, 27. This was an instance of divine condescension and favour that could not be sufficiently admired and celebrated. The same condescending goodness is manifested in Christian assemblies. To them the presence of the Lord God, our Saviour, is promised, and we may ask with admiration, "Does he who is the Lord of Glory, the Creator of all things, the Redeemer of all men, still dwell on the earth!" Behold, "all power is given unto him in heaven and earth!" will he then be present when his people meet together? He will be; and he will manifest himself in his appointed assemblies.

When he gave his commission to his disciples to preach the Gospel, he at the same time gave them the encouraging assurance—"Lo I am with you always, to the end of the world." Wherever his Gospel is preached, and his servants are gathered together to hear that Gospel, there he will always be among them, through all ages, to the end of time, manifesting his presence, and pouring out his blessing. Agreeing with this assurance is the gracious promise—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is a merciful part of this last promise that the object is not specified or limited. It is graciously left open. Like many other large and bountiful promises of the word of God, there is no limitation of any specific object. Whether it be for Prayer, or Hearing the Word, or for Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, for Christian Intercourse, Family Worship, or promoting a Charitable Institution; whatever be the particular religious purpose in assembling together, only let the meeting be in the name of Jesus, and it is an assembly to which he vouchsafes his presence.

There is indeed a limitation with regard to the number assembling; but that very limitation only heightens the divine mercy, for it is all in favour of his people. The lowest possible number that can form a company is that which our Lord specifies as what he will bless with his presence. O how infinite the wisdom, and how vast the kindness of giving the promise, even to so small a number as two or three, and not excluding, but rather increasing and enlarging the blessing according to the number and piety of faithful worshippers! In the primitive ages when Christians were violently persecuted, often they were not able to meet in larger companies than two or three; but this is a number which is easily procured, even in a barren and afflicted state of the Church. Often iniquitous laws have been passed against Christians meeting together; but human laws could not exclude them from the benefit of this promise.

Nor is this a blessing of small moment, as we shall see in more particularly noticing what is the peculiar nature of the presence of Christ in such assemblies.

It is not merely a presence in thought and purpose, in wish and intention, or by virtue of authority, like the Apostle who told the Corinthians, (1 Cor. v, 4.) "I verily, as absent in body, but present

in spirit, have judged already as though I were present." The Saviour is truly with his people, and, though unseen, really presides over them: "Head over all things to the Church, which is his body."

Neither is the presence of Christ of which we are speaking, merely that omnipresence by which, as God, he is in every place. This is indeed included, and thus the promise becomes a very plain testimony to the divinity of Christ. For as there are thousands and tens of thousands of meetings of his people in social, and family, and public acts of religion at the same time, and in different parts of the world, it is impossible that he could be in the midst of each, who is not every where present, "God over all, blessed forever." It is observable, also, that when our Saviour promised to be in the midst of his people, he did not follow the natural and obvious mode of expression —there I will be, but—"*there I am;*" as if to denote more expressly his divine nature; just as he told the Jews, "before Abraham was, I am." Thus he assumed that divine title by which God made himself known to the Israelites—"I am that I am; and he said, Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

What a cheering truth is this of the divine character and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ! Our mild and beneficent, our compassionate and gracious Saviour, is one with the Father; "He is the King of Glory"—the Lord of heaven and earth —the Most High God—every where present. As the sun shines in the firmament, warming, enlivening, cherishing, and blessing every land; so Jesus Christ is the "Light of the world." He is confined to no country, colour, or tongue. He shines, too, in places into which the rays of the natural sun never penetrate, nor can any thing exclude his presence and glory from the hearts of his people.

By the presence of Christ promised to Christian Assemblies, is meant, more than that general presence by which he is with, and in, every part of the world. It is not only a real but also a manifested and a beneficial presence, through the power of his Holy Spirit.

It is a *real* presence. Though our Lord Christ be invisible to our bodily sight, still he is truly present; he is actually among his people, though they see him only by the eye of faith: the expression, "There am I in the midst of them," sufficiently declares this. In another place he also thus describes the same truth. (Rev. ii, 1.) "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." How solemn and affecting, how reviving and delightful is the thought, that Jesus Christ walks in the midst of Christian assemblies! He, in the emphatic language of Scripture, *inhabits the praises* of his people. His eye observes every individual. He notices every mind, and discerns every heart. Unseen, he governs the whole assembly.

It is also a *manifested* presence; a presence that his people know and enjoy. He assured the Apostles that he would *manifest himself* to them. John xiv, 21. When his people are assembled together, he meets them; while they hear his word, credit his promises, and rely on his grace, he gives them his Spirit, he lifts up the light of his countenance upon them, and fills them with peace. He that has experienced this, understands it in a way that it is impossible to make equally intelligible to a mind filled with the world, and vanity, and sin. The Christian knows that he has often found the presence of Christ "in the midst of the congregation:" he has there had realizing views of his Being, his nearness, and his goodness, and has enjoyed sensible communion with him. In drawing "nigh to God," he has found the truth of the promise—"he will draw nigh to you." James iv, 8. It is this that fills Christian assemblies with a cloud of greater glory than filled the house of God when Solomon dedicated the Temple. Without the manifested presence of Christ, public preaching is but a cold and heartless service. One reason why assembling together to hear the word of Christ is so dull and tedious to most is, they think not of, and desire not, and expect not, the presence of the great King, and they therefore experience not its true blessedness. The greatest mul-

titude of worshippers, and the most splendid edifice, and the sweetest melodies, are mean and wretched, empty and unsatisfying, to the Christian's mind, if Christ be not there. The most humble and the very poorest assembly of real Christians, wherever they meet, has a glory that far excels any mere grandeur of edifice, largeness of company, splendour of rank, and external pomp of worship. This is the view with which the servants of God have from the beginning associated together. This presence it was that David so earnestly desired—"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Ps. xliii, 1, 2. If the writer may judge of others from himself, he would say, the faith of Christians is far too low on this subject, and that therefore we experience far less of this blessing than we otherwise should. O did Christians really feel and enjoy the presence of Christ while hearing his word, how would his house be crowded and overflow with devout, and teachable, and humble worshippers! The dignity and honour, the joy and happiness, of meeting so glorious a Being, would be a sufficient motive to make us constantly frequent the place where we could find him. Christian reader! fix your heart on this blessing when you assemble with your fellow Christians to hear the word of Christ. It has been well observed, that "the heart of a Christian affected with the love of Christ, is like a needle touched with the loadstone, ever tending to one point. It can no longer be quiet, no longer satisfied, at a distance from him. It is put into a continual motion towards Him. The motion is indeed weak and tremulous. Panting, breathing, and sighing after him in prayer and meditation are the life of it. But it leads us to leave all for him, and is continually pressing to him as its only centre and rest in this world."

He feels a love by love inspir'd,
Returning whence it came;
That can surrender all for ONE
Who left so much for him.

Need we add farther, that this is a most *beneficial* presence? Our Lord in promising to be with his people, manifestly designed to encourage and comfort them with the assurance of an important benefit. So the Lord promised Israel, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and will bless thee." Exod. xx, 24. Indeed as it regards careless, worldly, and perverse attendants on his word, who wilfully reject his truth, his being among his people brings no blessing to them. They should rather consider that he hath "his eyes like unto a flame of fire:" (Rev. ii, 18.) he searches their hearts, and they, continuing to reject him, shall ultimately fall under his just and tremendous displeasure. But to his humble followers, mourning for sin, depressed by their guilt, desiring to trust in him, and longing to serve him, his presence is pregnant with the richest blessings. When he says, *I am there*, it is as if he said, The very fountain head of all truth and wisdom, all power and holiness, all mercy and loving-kindness is there. Where Christ is, there is the full and inexhaustable, and overflowing spring of all spiritual blessing, all present and eternal good and happiness. Where Christ is, there is the propitiation for our sins, there is the throne of grace, there is God our portion, and our happiness for ever.

Look at the relations which he sustains toward us. He is our *prophet*. The minister teaches, but Christ only brings what is taught home with power to the heart. Christ alone makes it efficacious. In vain the words sound in our ears, if the Divine Prophet of the Church do not apply them to the heart, and by the gracious influences of his Spirit enable us to hear and understand, receive and obey them: but Jesus Christ is with his people, ready to teach them. He is our *Priest*. The minister is but an ambassador: his object is to direct you to go to the great Mediator, the Lord Christ; only that blessed High Priest "bears the iniquity of our holy things," atones for our guilt, and intercedes in our behalf. How little do we think of this gracious office, though the greater part of a long epistle, (that to the Hebrews,) dwells so

much upon it! Hence it is we are so little benefited, and have so little enjoyment while in the house of God. Our minds are more on the minister than the master; and we lose sight of the merciful and faithful "High Priest of our profession." While the minister is preaching, let your heart be led to Jesus, as the only channel by which spiritual blessings are to come. He is our *King*, the King of the whole earth, that King who alone can change the mind, renew the soul, subdue Satan, and give spiritual strength to the souls of men. He will, *he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.* Fear not, then, to follow his directions; fear not; for in serving him you will be safe and protected from every foe; doubt not his power and sufficiency to fulfil all that his ministers, in his name, promise to his obedient subjects.

It is especially *by his spirit* that *Christ manifests his presence.* When he comforted his disciples with the assurance, *I will come to you*, he explained his meaning, by showing that the Father would send the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, in his name, who would come and abide with them for ever. See John xiv, 16, 18, 26. The ordinances of the Gospel are peculiarly the institutions of Christ, ordained by himself as a mean and pledge of enjoying his presence, grace, and love. We may say of them, *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.* Sol. Song, vi, 2. There we receive the communications of his Spirit; (Gal. iii, 2,) and to them we should go, having Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, and expecting to enjoy communion with him in the larger and fuller gift of his Holy Spirit. How blessed would the Church be if every believer brought Christ with him, and could, in the ardent language of faith and experience, say, "I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, till I had brought him into my mother's house. Sol. Song, iii, 4. The Spouse was not content till she had brought him into the Church.

Christ, then, in all his fulness and blessedness, with all his unsearchable riches, is to be found on earth, is to be found among his people. "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion." Ps. lxxvi, 1, 2. What a motive is here to assemble together! Be assured, the beauty, the glory, and the benefit of all Christian assemblies is closely connected with realizing views of the direct presence and blessing of our Lord and Saviour.

Do you inquire, *how may I enjoy this blessing?* O that we really believed that it could be obtained, and were earnestly desiring it! Bishop Beveridge says, "If our blessed Saviour were now upon earth, what flocking would there be from all parts to see him; and if he was but in any part of this kingdom, how remote soever, which of us but would strive to go to him? What haste should we make, what pains should we take, to get as near to him as we could, that we might not only see him, but enjoy his company and hear some of his divine discourses from his own mouth! with what profound reverence should we approach unto his presence! How attentively should we hearken to every word that came from him! How glad should we be to see him smiling upon us, and owning us for his servants and disciples! And when we had been a while in his company, how loth should we be to leave him! How apt should we be to cry out, as St. Peter did at the transfiguration, *Lord, it is good for us to be here!* There is a way whereby we may meet with our blessed Saviour every day in the year, and enjoy his presence as effectually, to all intents and purposes, as if he now dwelt among us, as he did once among the Jews, in our own nature." We have his own blessed assurance that he is with his disciples whenever they meet *in his name.*

Make it then your great aim and desire to *meet in the name of Christ.* Do not come to hear because it is expected of you, or you wish for something to talk about, or you want to be amused or excited, or desire to say you have heard such a preacher; but meet *in the name of Christ.* In order to do this, go to hear as his disciples, as those who belong to him and desire to be taught by him.

Go, *in dependence on his promises:* there are many great and precious promises given to those that hear. Let David's feelings then be yours, with reference to those promises—"Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eye of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us." Ps. cxxxiii, 1, 2. Go, *in obedience to his authority.* He says seven times to the churches in Asia, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Let the will, and precept, and direction of Christ be your main reason for hearing; and finally go *with a steadfast eye to him as your Mediator.* In order truly to meet in the name of Christ, we must trust in him as our only Saviour, aspire after the blessings of his salvation, rely on his atonement, come to God through him, submit to his word, and yield ourselves to the influences of his good Spirit.

It is not therefore the multitude, but the faith and piety of those that assemble together, that ensures the presence of Christ. The Roman Catholics would gladly, under the name of the Church, and from such a promise, maintain the infallibility of their particular Church, or of general councils; but wherever particular Churches seek their own glory, or Councils have been held otherwise than out of regard to the glory of Christ, as they had no shadow of claim to inherit this promise, so they have greatly erred from his truth.

This peculiar privilege may be improved by an important and individual application to every reader. Have you never been able to say, while in Christian assemblies, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father*, and *with his Son Jesus Christ?* then you have never seen their true blessedness. Probably you have never once thought of Christ. If you have had no view to his presence, you cannot be surprised that you have not enjoyed it. Here, as in other things, *he that seeketh findeth.* O that you went to hear his ministers with the same desires which *those Greeks*, who *came up to worship at the Feast*, felt, when they said to Philip, *Sir, we would see Jesus!* Look only to our Lord Jesus Christ as the only righteous advocate and prevalent intercessor for every good. When your hearts are raised to fellowship with him in his ordinances, you will experience a new life, and joy, and power, in the ministration of his word.

O Christians! let us never be content with the outward ordinance, without real communion with Christ in it: and should we not yet have obtained this, at least may we feel a hungering and thirsting after it, and diligently seek it till we find it.

CHAPTER V.

The Holy Spirit, received in hearing, the only Source of genuine Profit.

There are those who attend public worship and hear in the course of years, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of faithful sermons, and yet manifestly by their general spirit and conduct, remain unconverted and worldly. There are others who in the main derive good from their attendance, and yet cannot with truth be said to obtain edification, in any degree in proportion to the vast opportunities of religious instruction which they receive. And there are, again, those evidently fed, and nourished, and blessed by the sermons which they hear, and steadily growing *in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

How is this to be accounted for? and whence does this variety proceed? It is not owing merely to a difference in the ministry. You may observe all this under the same minister, and in the same congregation. It is not owing to a difference in natural character, for it is observable in persons of the same natural disposition; nay, we sometimes see that those characters whom we should be ready to think most favourably affected towards the truth, are those on whom it makes the least impression; and those whom we should think most likely to re-

ceive it gladly, and improve it largely, are the very persons who reject it.

The Bible explains the cause of this apparent anomaly. All, by nature, are averse to divine truth, and would reject it; and various motives, besides love of the truth, may produce an outward attendance on the ministry. Man's own good disposition makes not the difference. Neither is the wisdom of the minister that which produces the change. The whole difference is from divine grace. This is so obvious, and so admitted by real Christians, that while the Apostle asks the question, he thinks it needless to give the answer—"Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. iv, 7. But we are far too apt to lose sight of this, and to forget who alone gives the blessing. We depend on the minister, or on our own fancied powers of improvement: and if the writer may judge others by himself, this is far too much the case even with those who admit the doctrine of divine grace. He would ask himself, and ask others the question, are we living under the full influence of this doctrine—do we constantly, in practice, as well as professedly, seek the grace of God, so as not only to know experimentally its necessity, but to feel also its blessedness?

The whole subject may be practically brought before us under the assertion of the Apostle, "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God, that giveth the increase." This assertion was not made by a novice in religion, but by one who had deep knowledge and experience; it was not made by a wild enthusiast, but by a holy, sober, and practical teacher; it was not made by an unsuccessful minister, but by one more blessed with success, than any other human instructor has ever been; it was not asserted merely as the conviction of human wisdom, but as the divinely inspired dictate of the Holy Ghost.

The figure is very expressive. The allusion is to the husbandman, or gardener, putting plants into the ground, and cultivating them. They do not grow by virtue of any power derived from the gardener. "God gave to the plant its life and nature by which it shoots up, buds, and brings forth fruit. God makes his sun to shine, and his rain to descend upon it, and so it becomes vigorous and fruitful." So in spiritual agriculture: it is not any ability in man that communicates the power of growing, nor is it merely any native vigour that causes the fruitfulness; but the blessing of God in the use of appointed means. Our souls flourish and are fruitful as they are cherished by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and partake of the refreshing showers of divine grace.

Human agents cannot of themselves *convert the soul.* Look at our state by nature, as described in the Holy Scriptures, *dead in trespasses and sins.* What can the dead do of themselves? What human being can give life to the dead? We are described as in ourselves, *blind* and *in darkness.*—Who can open the eyes of those that are born blind? Our hearts are said to be *hard* and *stony*—what human power can make them soft and tender? It is evident from the scriptural account of our natural state, that we can neither convert our own hearts, nor those of others.*

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* The author is not ignorant of the great difficulties that attend the subject of the existence of moral evil, and man's sin and inability, as consistent with God's wisdom and benevolence, and of the way in which it has exercised the highest human intellect, and the ablest Christian writers; but he rests in the plain words of Scripture. Those who have hastily made up their minds, without due consideration, and are positive in their own views of this subject, would do well to see how much may be said on all sides, and how nearly real Christians agree, by reading such a work as Baxter's "Catholic Theology;" or if that be too voluminous, the abstract of it in "Bates' Observations on Important Points in Divinity." Dean Milner on the Liberty of the Will, Edwards on the Will, and Scott's Synod of Dort, are instructive works in the same reference. The real solution of the difficulty seems above our comprehension; and, was it not intended to be so for the exercise and proof of our faith, and submission to God? Let us repose with unshaken faith and perfect comfort in the divine wisdom and love, righteousness and perfection. Satan has, by the unbridled speculations of men trusting in their own wisdom, even where their object might be good, gained an immense advantage to divide and distract the Church, and to bring in separations, and distance, and hatred, among those

There is one plain and obvious passage on this point that cannot be mistaken. St. John, describing the true spring of regeneration, and our adoption into the family of God, says of the sons of God, (John i, 13,) they *were not born of blood*, not by natural descent or earthly power, *nor of the will of the flesh*, not by their own, or any other innate good disposition, or desire, *nor of the will of man*, nor by the power of understanding and reason, or any persuasion, influence, desire, or efforts of their fellow-creatures —these are not the first causes and true springs of this great change: *but they were born of God;* of him alone, as going before, providing and prospering all other means, and to whom alone must be ascribed all the praise and glory.

All ages confirm this. Look at the period before the coming of Christ! See how often the ministry of Moses, notwithstanding all the splendid miracles with which it was sanctioned and attested, failed of success among the Israelites! What was the reason? It is declared, (Deut. xxix, 4,) "The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." Look at the ministry of Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others! There you see various gifts and talents, men of firm integrity, of unshaken boldness, of the sublimest genius, and of the tenderest affections, labouring with comparatively little effect. The reason we find, John xii, 39, 40. "Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Look even at the ministry of our Lord himself! His character was perfect; his doctrine, altogether wise, and pure, and exactly adapted to his hearers; yet it pleased him in his own ministry to let us have an illustrious proof of the truth which we are establishing; and even could he say, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The labours of the Apostles, accompanied with the promised and full effusion of the Holy Spirit, were largely blessed; but in some instances that was withheld, and then even their sermons seemed only to harden and enrage those to whom they were addressed. These things may show us the insufficiency of human agency without the grace of God.

Human agents cannot of themselves *edify those who are converted*, or carry on the work of divine grace. Men still retain, when converted, a carnal nature; and though that be mortified, and brought under by a divine counteracting power, yet there are strong remains of it, and it is still enmity against God; and fresh *supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*, (Phil, i, 19,) day by day, can alone enable us to vanquish and overcome our corruption. Without me, says the only wise Lord, whatever man may say, *without me, ye can do nothing*. The Apostle excludes both minister and people from all share in imparting or procuring spiritual good. *We are not sufficient*, says the Holy Paul, *to think any thing as of ourselves—Neither is he that watereth any thing*.

Success in hearing, and growth in grace, do not primarily depend on the ministry. Who more able, or wise, or holy, than Paul? who more eloquent or mighty in the Scriptures, than Apollos? But Paul plants, and Apollos waters in

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who should love as brethren. The author is fully satisfied, that in the warmth of controversy, and in the desire to guard against opposing errors, many writers of real piety and great talents have used far too strong language, and Christian love (the more excellent way) has been forsaken, and a mere war of words, has unhappily resulted. All irreverence towards God, or so speaking as if the creature could find out the great Creator to perfection; any thing that would give the praise of man's salvation to himself, and not to God in Christ, the light, joy, and hope of the world; or on the other hand, any thing that would weaken moral obligation; and any thing that casts the fault of man's sin and ruin on God, (the very essence of the refinements of Heathenism) should be most carefully avoided. And after all the researches of men of the acutest minds, we are compelled to come back and rest in the simple and plain declarations of God's word. On these subjects, it is especially important not to be *wise above what is written*. 1 Cor. vi, 6. The wisest know no more than is in the Scriptures revealed to the poor and unlearned. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.* See the Rev. John Scott's valuable Sermon on this text.

vain, except as *God giveth the increase.* 1 Cor. iii, 4—7. In the largest success which the Gospel ever had, preached by the Apostles or any others, though multitudes received the Gospel, we never find that *all* who heard, believed and were converted.

These and other similar passages respecting divine teaching, cannot be referred merely (as Socinians endeavour to do) to an outward revelation. This will be evident, not only from what has already been mentioned, but also from the prayers for those, and the prayers of those, in possession of the Holy Scriptures. The prayer of the Apostle for the Ephesians, (ch. i, and iii,) clearly shows that more is needed than the outward Revelation which they at that time had. As it has been remarked, "If God gave spiritual knowledge no other way than by his providence, affording outward means, men ought not to pray for light from God after once they get the Gospel; for the prayer in that case would be for new revelations of truths not contained in the word of God, the scope of which is enthusiasm and delusion." Prayers in the Scriptures for divine teaching, by men already possessing the Scriptures, and the promises of guidance and teaching to particular characters, (Ps. xxv, 9; Prov. iii, 6,) the mere outward Scripture being possessed by all men of every character, show the same need of inward divine teaching. True it is, the outward revelation is full of light and truth: true it is we have natural understanding and capacity to comprehend what it reveals. It is not from any defect in the Bible, or in our natural powers, that we insist on the necessity of having the Holy Spirit; but it is because of our *evil heart of unbelief.*

The learning, and human qualifications of the hearer, are not the true spring of improvement. The Apostle says, (1 Cor. i, 26,) "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Nor does a growing improvement of the word depend on man's natural goodness, nor on any natural power or effort in man: "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy." Well it is that it does not depend on us; every experienced Christian heartily concurs in the sentiment of the Apostle, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." We have no naturally holy dispositions, inducing us to love divine truth, and embrace it, and duly improve it. Those dispositions by which we do so, come from the special grace and mercy of God. How humbling is this doctrine; and yet it is the very ground-work of all true faith, repentance, humility, hope, love, and happiness!

If it be objected against such a statement, that its tendency is to produce indolence and despondency—that it leads to a disregard and neglect of human instruments and efforts—we reply, By no means. And the very figure by which the Holy Scripture illustrates the doctrine, furnishes a sufficient answer to such an objection. Shall the husbandman never plough, nor harrow, nor sow, because he cannot make the seed shoot, and grow, and spring up, nor command the sun to shine, nor cause the rain to descend? Shall the gardener never plant, because he cannot make his plant take root and flourish, and bear fruit, without the heavenly influence? He uses the means, and God gives the blessing. Let us do the same thing, and we shall as surely receive a blessing. It has been well observed, "The seaman knows that he cannot sail without wind, and the wind is not in his power, nor in the power of any creature; yet though it is not in his power to command a favourable gale when he pleases, he does not therefore neglect every thing concerning his ship; he fits it out, and makes preparation, till that wind, which depends upon the power of the Creator, come." "Faith comes by hearing;" that is the divinely-appointed method for conversion and growth in grace. Where preaching is neglected and despised, there religion does not flourish. Where Christ is proclaimed to attentive hearers, there, invariably, a blessing follows. "The word does not return void, but prospers in the thing whereto God sends it." We speak of preaching and hearing, not only because

We speak of preaching and hearing, not only because this is the subject of the Treatise, but because it is God's great ordinance for this end; for though the statement of divine truth be so plain and simple in the Scriptures, that a wayfaring man need not err therein; yet through our corruption we disregard the sacred truth when hid in a book. The blazing torch of Revelation must be lifted up, that every eye may behold it. We need the continual and powerful ministry of the word to awaken and excite our attention, to instruct and inform our minds, and to press home on our consciences the lessons which God has given us.

Should any still ask, What is the use of directions? or, Why should we be exhorted to duty? We reply with Maclaurin, "Exhortations show us our weakness, our duty, and our danger. They show us what God approves, hates, or desires; and what is necessary to salvation. The corruption of man's nature would never have appeared to be so evil as it is, if it were not for the offers of God's grace. Were it not that experience proves it, men might be ready to think that it is impossible wicked, corrupt creatures, shortly to die, shortly to receive a sentence to endless misery, would refuse or despise the offers of reconciliation."

Should any go so far as to ridicule all expectations of divine grace as folly or enthusiasm, let them remember, that they do in fact ridicule all prayer and worship of God, and all religious services. There are persons who make a conscience of outward worship, and yet laugh at the very meaning of the prayers which they offer. In truth, as it has been observed, "they mock God when they pray to him to make them holy: for if there be not a divine operation on the soul of a sinner to give just and holy inclinations, it is a mocking God to seek these things from him, to pray to him, to mortify our sins, and to cleanse our hearts, or to praise him."

But if any reader have entertained the objection that this doctrine fosters indolence, we would ask, May not this lead you to detect the real state of your own mind? You have seen how the husbandman and the gardener act, and how the general conduct of men in temporal matters meets the difficulty; is not then the attaching any weight to such a difficulty an indication of a want of real concern for your spiritual interests? Are you as willing to receive divine truth, as really desirous of spiritual good, as thoroughly disposed to use means for the advancement of your eternal, as they are for that of their earthly concerns?

But, though the insufficiency of man's teaching should not lead us to disregard and neglect the ministry, it should teach us not to overvalue human instruments, or set one against another. The Apostle had to reprove this fault—"While one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" This is an error into which even good men are apt to fall. Mr. Cecil remarks, "I once said to myself, in the foolishness of my heart, "What sort of sermon must that have been which was preached by St. Peter, when three thousand souls were converted at once?" What sort of sermon? such as other sermons! There is nothing in it extraordinary. The effect was not produced by his eloquence, but by the mighty power of God present with his word. It is in vain to attend one minister after another, and to hear sermon after sermon, unless we pray that the Holy Spirit accompany his word."*

Let us then *cease from man.* They who fancy any human being, however great or excellent, to be the only means of their conversion or edification, are guilty of idolatry, and transfer to the creature that regard and confidence which is due only to the Creator. Do not sacrilegiously divide the honour be-

* While the fact of God's operation on the soul is strenuously maintained, we pretend not to explain the mode. Many of the controversies which have agitated the Church, and produced the most hostile feelings, might have been spared, had the assertion of our Lord been duly weighed—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." O that men were willing to be ignorant, and to confess their ignorance, where God has not revealed his ways to them!

tween man and God. While you esteem highly and love sincerely the faithful labourer for his works' sake, give all the glory of every good to God alone. What we transfer to ourselves we take from God. Be afraid of being lavish in extolling man, or thinking highly of the creature. Faithful ministers dread to receive human praise, lest God should be dishonoured. It is his purpose that "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted."

These things amply show the weakness and insufficiency of man, without the grace of God, to convert and edify the soul.

But, blessed be God, this is only part of the truth, and the humbling part; there is another part of the subject full of consolation. While man can of himself do nothing, through Christ strengthening him he can do all things; and God, who commands the seed to be sown, himself giveth the increase.

The form in which the Apostle speaks when he says, "God giveth the increase," claims attention, as it excludes the hearer as well as the preacher. The Apostle does not say the hearer of the word produces the increase from the good use of his own powers. The views which some entertain, had they been correct, would have led to such a mode of expression.

They would have said, All depends on the state of your own mind. If you have a good heart, and a right disposition, then you will hear with advantage. This is very true in one way, but very false in another. It is true, if we duly regard God's grace, making the heart good, and giving suitable dispositions, and blessing the word: but it is false, if we imagine any man has by nature a good heart; for where is the heart naturally disposed to spiritual and heavenly things? where is the man with a truly holy disposition, or that has by his own power and ability acquired it? None such can be found. The special grace of God is wanting for that very preparation of the heart which is needful for our hearing aright; or, in the words of the Church of England, "We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, [that is, preceding or going before us] that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."

The expression—"giveth the increase," however, suggests that it pleases God to work through the instrumentality of man. It is not "God makes the Christian without means," "God does the work without employing man's agency;" but the expression is such as to show that man must plant and water, must faithfully use all the appointed means, or he cannot expect the wished-for increase. Thus are we equally guarded against proud, self-righteous, and self-sufficient thoughts of human ability on the one hand, and disregard of means and Antinomian licentiousness on the other. "The sinner cannot quicken his own soul, but he ought to use the means of grace. If we would have the Lord do for us and ours what man cannot do, we must diligently attend to all those things which we can, and ought to do."

We will now show, that on those very points on which the Scriptures declare the insufficiency of man, they fully express the power of divine grace in conjunction with the word.

Thus God *converts the soul.* He promises it as his work—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezek. xxxvi. If any have spiritual life, the Apostle shows them where to ascribe all the praise—"God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

And this great change is *by means of the word.* St. James (ch. i, 18.) speaks very expressly on this point—"Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures; wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear." St. Peter is equally decisive—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever

.....and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. i, 23—25. Thus all glory is taken from man, and given to God; and yet the means of salvation which God blesses, are carefully and specially noticed. So the Apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Then look at the history of God's dealings with his Church. The best human instruments, as we have shown, were insufficient, when God did not work by his Spirit. The weakest are mighty through him. Whom did God appoint to convert the world? Philosophers, Statesmen, Orators, the learned, and the wise? No! the very reverse. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. i, 27—29. Twelve men of humble birth, many of them poor fishermen, despised Galileans, and of slender attainments, were the chief instruments in commencing and establishing the kingdom of God upon earth. By their ministry, we find in the Acts of the Apostles, when the first fruits of the Spirit were given, three thousand were converted in one day, and presently they grew to five thousand. They are dispersed by persecutions, but the Church, under this divine influence, only increases more and more. In Judea and Samaria, Cæsarea and Damascus, the Gospel is gladly received. It still spread wider and wider, till it covered the known world. Such was the invincible energy of the Holy Ghost; so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Our Reformers felt strongly their need of divine grace. "Without this grace," says Jewell,* "you can do nothing; you can neither feel the burden of your sins, nor seek to be eased of them, nor perceive when they are forgiven; you cannot rend your heart, and set apart from you the vanities and lusts of the flesh which does evermore fight against the soul; you cannot discern the word of God, and by it enter the way to everlasting life; you cannot abhor that which is evil and cleave unto that which is good; without the grace of God, you cannot continue steadfast and constant in faith and in hope of the mercies of God through our Saviour Jesus Christ. The words of the preacher enter in at the ear, the Spirit of God conveyeth them to the heart."

The state of the Church of Christ in our own day manifests the same truth. Where there may be deep learning, great talent, and many external qualifications, but Christ is not preached, and his Spirit is not honoured, and the great doctrines of his Gospel are adulterated and concealed, no spiritual good is done, not a single soul is converted from the error of his way. It pleases God, too, sometimes, to try his faithful servants, even where he has bestowed superior gifts and talents, with comparatively small success, though he generally in one way or other, largely uses the gifts which he confers, to the extension of his own kingdom and glory; and really, and perhaps more widely in the result, prospers their labours.* At other times, God has been pleased to use a preacher with very little learning, and not endued with great powers of mind, but with much zeal and love, and a devoted heart, and to make him, though insignificant in the eyes of the world, and perhaps one who really speaks and acts in some respects indiscreetly, yet to make him the successful instrument of conveying his grace to many immortal souls.† His design is the same now, as in the days of the Apostles, "that no flesh should glory in his

* See his Exposition on 1 Thess. i, 1—5.

* We see this in such cases as Hervey, Adam, Walker and Scott, men (comparatively with other very inferior men in judgment and acquirements) little prospered in their personal ministry, yet largely and extensively blessed in their publications.

† The debate between an aged Christian of little human learning, who had suffered in the persecutions, and an arrogant Philosopher, who

presence;" that all may see and acknowledge, respecting Christians, the truth of the Apostle's declaration—"Of him," (that is, of God,) "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

It is only the same divine grace that is efficacious *to edify the converted man.*

It is true that the ministry of the word is the means of edification. It is appointed of God for that purpose. Eph. iv, 11, 12. "He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors, and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Yet it is but the means, and effectual only as the Holy Ghost makes it so. All our growth in piety is in proportion to the free grace of God, given according to his own infinite love and good pleasure. Eph. i. 5; Phil. ii. 13. The Apostle, in the case of the Thessalonians, puts this distinction very clearly and expressly. They were greatly edified by his preaching, and he shows why they were so; "our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It is this divine power that takes away prejudices, 2 Cor. x, 5. and makes a lasting impression by writing the truth on our hearts. Jer. xxxi, 31; 2 Cor. iii, 3.

That the Holy Spirit is the only efficient cause of all spiritual edification, might easily be shown at length, by going through all the graces of the advanced Christian, and marking how his faith, his repentance, humility, love to God, and deadness to the world, are given him from above. One passage may suffice—"the fruit of the Spirit," (not of our natural power and disposition, not of the talents of man, not of eloquence and learning,) "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

The experience of Christians corresponds with this statement. The same truths have a very different effect on our minds at different times, when we can assign no ordinary cause adequate to account for this difference. Sometimes when we read the Bible, or hear sermons, we feel dead and dull, wandering and distracted; we strive perhaps against it, and yet feel equally lifeless and incapable of raising our thoughts heavenward to God. At other times *the word is quick and powerful*, every part of it seems full of weighty and important truth, our hearts are softened and made tender, we receive the Gospel, we retain it, and are edified by those very truths which at a former season made no impression at all. The principles which we have maintained from the Holy Scriptures explain all this. In one case it pleases God justly to withhold that grace to which we have no claim, and can only receive at any time, of unmerited mercy, and at another time, in boundless mercy and undeserved love, *he worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

The variety which we may observe among real Christians springs from *one and the self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will.* A great difference may be seen among Christians. There are those of whose final acceptance with God we should be sorry to doubt, for they appear to be resting on the only sure foundation, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be generally upright and sincere in their conduct; yet their tempers are but little subdued and sanctified, their conversation is generally on worldly things, or the mere externals of religion, and they manifestly enjoy little comfort in the ways of godliness.

But you sometimes see another character, a devoted Christian, whose heart is filled with love to Christ. There is a holy atmosphere, as it were, about him. Wherever he goes, he is a blessing. He is like a fragrant flower brought into a room, the refreshing odour of which dif-

derided the Clergy as ignorant, is very instructive. While many Christians were fearful as to the result, the Philosopher was so struck with the plain account of the creation—the incarnation, life, and death of Christ—and the future judgment, given by the Christian, that he owned himself vanquished, declaring that he was changed by a divine influence. See Sozomen, lib. i, ch. xvii; or Milner, vol. ii, p. 57.

fuses itself among all the company.* His reception of the truth has made him meek and humble, kind and loving, holy and devout, cheerful and happy. He goes about doing good, a fair pattern of the great Redeemer, in whom he is trusting and rejoicing, in whose presence he lives, and whose glory he is daily advancing.

The whole of this difference is according as God the Holy Spirit deals to every man the measure of grace. There is no Christian disposition of which he is not the author. The lukewarm Christian seeks not, or seeks not constantly, and earnestly, this aid. The devoted Christian, quickened by the Spirit of Christ, has sought and obtained a large supply of the Spirit, and he enters fully into the declaration, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God.

Immediately connected with our edification are three important blessings, imparted by the Holy Spirit through hearing, which it may be profitable more particularly to consider: The knowledge of the glory of Christ—the consolation of the soul of the believer—and his sealing unto the day of redemption.

1. The Holy Spirit specially *glorifies Christ in the ministry of the word.* Our Lord speaking of the work of the Spirit says, (John xvi, 13, 14.) "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Holy Ghost shows us unsearchable riches in Christ, suited to all our wants, and never to be exhausted. He discovers to us, efficaciously and experimentally, wisdom in Christ for our ignorance, righteousness for our guilt and condemnation, sanctification for our pollution, and full redemption from all our misery and ruin. We cannot discern this of ourselves. Our minds are covered with prejudice, and our hearts filled with the love of sin. The Holy Spirit removes our prejudices, purifies our affections, and enables us to discern the inexpressible value of Christ and his salvation. By nature we see *no form or comeliness* in Christ, *no beauty in him that we should desire him.* Hence the Apostle tells us, that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." When taught by this Spirit, the soul supremely values and eagerly thirsts after the knowledge of Christ, and feels and says with the Apostle, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. iii, 8. The atonement and intercession of our Lord Christ, his love and grace, his tenderness, sympathy, and compassion, are discerned by us, and applied with power to our hearts through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, in the ministry of the word. "Jesus Christ and him crucified," is the very substance of a faithful ministry, and such preaching is "in demonstration of the spirit and of power, and Christians can say of such truths, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." 1 Cor. ii, 1—10. To *preach Christ* is the minister's work; to *hear Christ* is the people's; but to *reveal Christ* is the express office of the Holy Ghost. If any of my readers have hitherto felt little value for Christ, and little love to him, and feeble desires after him, they may here see the true cause—a want of the special aid of the Holy Ghost. O let it be our great concern to obtain this inestimable benefit; let it be our great desire that the Holy Spirit may discover the glories of the Saviour, as exhibited in his word, that our hearts may be drawn to him.

2. The Holy Spirit makes *the word of Christ a source of great comfort and gladness.* This is one important part of the ministry. The blessed Spirit gives the direction to ministers, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem:" he makes it their office "to comfort them that mourn."

* A Hindoo convert recently expressed this sentiment to his Christian instructor thus beautifully: "May God's mercy be with you, for ever I bless him that I have seen you; as the Sandal tree communicates its fragrance to every thing that touches it, so may I retain the savour of your conversation."

But all their ministrations are only instrumental. It is the "Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, who teaches you all things, and brings all things to your remembrance." Therefore when the hearts of the disciples were troubled at the thoughts of losing their Lord, he dwells on the work of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth: I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." Indeed, all his purifying and sanctifying influences are calculated to produce this effect; the fruit of the Spirit being love, joy, and peace, must console and gladden. What a cheering and delightful effect of the Gospel is here! Christian reader, all your *joy and peace in believing*, and all *your abounding in hope*, is *through the power of the Holy Ghost.* He applies the blood of Christ, as shed for sinners, with power to your conscience; he gives you *the full assurance of hope;* he causes you to *rejoice in the Lord.* When you are burdened by sin, when you are desponding under a sense of your guilt and weakness, when you are ready to sink under your own unprofitableness and deadness, then the Holy Spirit can and does revive and console by some sweet promise, and cheer the heart by bringing before us the love of our heavenly Father, and the bowels of compassion in our gracious Redeemer. Like the gentle and tender dove, the Holy Spirit comes down and lights upon us, and soothes, and tranquillizes, and gladdens. He kindles a holy fire, and yet fills us with inexpressible meekness, kindness, and gentleness. O the blessed state of that mind in which the Holy Ghost ever reigns, and which he ever replenishes!

3. The work of the Spirit through hearing, is also compared to *an impression made by a seal.* "In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise:" Eph. i, 13. sealed unto the day of redemption. The end of sealing is to mark for one's own, by stamping an impression similar to the seal. Thus God's children are by his Spirit made like him in holiness, and receive the assurance that they belong to God, and shall partake of the heavenly inheritance. Eph. i, 14. The blessed Spirit, when truly received, produces all those holy dispositions. He humbles the proud heart. He makes the word powerful like a hammer, to break in pieces that which is hard. Jer. xxiii, 29. The great and exceeding precious promises received by faith, fill the heart with love to God, and love to man, and we become partakers of the divine nature. The same Spirit gives a cleansing and sanctifying power to the word, (Eph. v, 26.) and fills the believing hearer with full assurance of hope and joy in the Holy Ghost. The statutes become the rejoicing of the heart, and our heritage forever. These, and similar holy and happy graces and tempers, are the marks of this Divine seal. O that every reader may be able to discern them in his own soul!

Such being the gracious character of the work of the Spirit, how invaluable is *hearing the truth as one of the ordinary and appointed means by which God conveys this inestimable gift!* This is the way in which God bestows his grace. We receive the promise of the Spirit by the hearing of faith; it is that divinely-instituted plan, with which God's power concurs. It has been observed by Maclaurin, that there are two great principles of Christianity, distinguishing it from all other religions. "1. That the knowledge of Christ Jesus, the doctrine of God's grace, is the means of turning our souls to God, and of cleansing us from our filthiness and our idols. And then, 2. That though that doctrine be an excellent means of turning us to God; that it is but a means, that it is but an instrument; the efficacy of it depends upon the manifestation of the power of God, that exceeding greatness of power that raises souls from the dead." Both these principles are brought before us, when we are told that the first Christian teachers went to Antioch "preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord." Acts xi, 20,

21. This teaches us a most important practical lesson as to what we should expect and desire in hearing. Let us not attend a public ministry from curiosity, custom, love to a favourite preacher, or the mere alarms of conscience; but let us go in obedience to the will of God, hoping to obtain conversion if unconverted, and growth in grace if we have obtained mercy: in short, expecting to receive divine succour and strength in the way of God's appointment. O Christian reader, if you would derive profit in hearing, we beseech you mainly to look for God's help and blessing! No preacher in the world can do you good without God's special grace. While you go to hear, say with the Psalmist, "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens." We are ever too forgetful of Him, from whom every good comes. We, poor and insufficient creatures, form a sad estimate of the need and value of his grace. Let us then, if we really desire spiritual blessings, look more to the Lord, the Spirit, and come to the Christian assembly, hear while in that assembly, and return from it, in the spirit of prayer. Thus hearing the sermons, though poor in themselves, will be blessed to our spiritual and eternal good.

Thus they of old received the Holy Spirit. Cornelius is directed to send for Peter, who preaches the Gospel to him and those with him; and "while Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." The Apostle Paul appeals to the Galatians—"This only would I learn of you; received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Wisdom is described as calling men from sin and ignorance, saying, "Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." God honors the ministry of the word, and the doctrines of salvation, by making them the appointed means of communicating his grace, the very channel through which the waters of life flow down to us.

But do you question whether you may now hope to receive this gift, or ask whether it is still bestowed? We reply, God has declared that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. He has graciously promised, "It shall come to pass in the last days, I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh," a promise belonging to the whole period of the Christian Dispensation, and embracing in the comprehensive terms, *all flesh*, the whole human race, as St. Peter tells the Jews: "the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Do you allege your unworthiness? Remember that the blessing is *bestowed freely*. True it is, it cost our Saviour much. He shed his most precious blood, rose from the dead, and ascended on high, that he might receive this gift "for the rebellious also." Ps. lxviii, 18. But we obtain it most freely. The very expression, "I will pour out of my Spirit," shows how freely it is given to us, even as freely as the clouds pour out the rain that refreshes and fructifies the earth. As free as the light of heaven, as free as the air we breathe, as free as the water we drink, so freely is this gift granted to all that seek. The invitation of Christ, with reference to this very gift, is, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Do you still doubt whether you are included? Remember that *there is no restriction in the promise*. No blessing is more unreservedly, and unrestrictedly, more expressly and decidedly promised, than the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord appeals to the universal, and the strongest feelings of mankind, the love of parents to their children, and then adds, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The promise includes, as we have just said, *all flesh*. Acts ii, 17. None need shut themselves out from so great a benefit. It belongs to the old; "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." It belongs to the young; "I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." High and low, rich and poor, converted and unconverted, all need, and all may be benefitted by the communications of this divine gift.

Would you then, Christian reader,

largely receive this divine assistance? use the means of grace only as the means, and not the end. Be much in reading the Holy Scriptures, and give a diligent attendance to the preaching of the Gospel, still looking upward for that divine unction by which these means shall be made a real blessing. Remember too, that this Holy Spirit, like his emblem, the tender dove, is easily driven away. Grieve him not by the indulgence of a worldly and carnal temper; quench not his light by any impure and sinful passions. Resist not, provoke not, this blessed Comforter. But walk in the Spirit, and mind the things of the Spirit; "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

This doctrine is peculiar to revealed religion, and it is of daily and constant use. It teaches us man's utter insufficiency, and God's fulness, and all-sufficiency. Let it lead us to the life of faith and love; to a simple dependance on divine strength, given through a crucified Lord, to a constant application to him for the supply of all our need, and to fervent prayers for the outpouring of the Spirit on the whole world.

This chapter cannot be concluded more suitably than with the prayer of the Martyr Ridley,—"O heavenly Father, the author and fountain of all truth, the bottomless sea of all understanding; send down, we beseech thee, thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, and lighten our understandings with the beams of thy heavenly grace. We ask this, O merciful Father, not in respect of our deserts, but for thy dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

CHAPTER VI.

The relative Situations, and respective Duties of Ministers and of People.

The New Testament makes it sufficiently clear, that from the beginning of the Gospel, there has ever been a peculiar body of men set apart for the instruction and edification of the church. The twelve apostles were first appointed, and the foundation of the christian ministry is the direction to them—"Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. xxviii, 19, 20. The apostles went forth and preached every where; and, as the work grew and extended, they appointed others, with directions to ordain fresh teachers, as the church was enlarged. St. Paul says to Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee:" (Titus, i, 5.) and he tells Timothy,—The things which thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. ii, 2.

The necessity of this appointment for the salvation of men is strongly put by the apostle when showing the connection of prayer with our salvation; he asks, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. x. The design of this appointment is explained by the apostle, when he shows the object which God had in view in raising up different kinds of teachers in the beginning of Christianity. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

There may be discovered in the New Testament, as it appears to the writer, and especially in those parts descriptive of it in its latest and most settled state, those three distinct orders of ministers which the Church of England adopts.* The

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*The Author wishes as much as possible to abstain from controverted ground, but while Christians of other communions, in valuable and practical works, give views in which he cannot concur, he feels called on to give this statement. He concurs, however, in Professor Campbell's remarks, that the question so much agitated in regard to the original form of government established by the Apostles, though not trivial, is

late Mr. Hey of Leeds has drawn out the proofs of this from the New Testament in a very simple and perspicuous manner. It is allowed that the terms *Bishop* (επισκοπος, overseer) and *Elder*, (πρεσβυτερος, whence the English word Priest) are used for the same kind of ministers in the New Testament. It is clear that this office was distinct from that of the Deacon, which was probationary with respect to a higher office. 1 Tim. iii, 1--13.

The question then comes, Are there proofs that there was a superior class of ministers to those called by the name of Deacons and Presbyters, or Bishops? an office to which the name of Bishop has since been exclusively confined. The author decidedly thinks that there are such proofs, though only incidental, and much less insisted on than the character and conduct of ministers.* A peculiar office was committed to Timothy and Titus: (1 Tim. iv, 14; 2 Tim. i. 8; Titus i, 5.) they were directed to ordain presbyters and deacons, (1 Tim. iii; Titus i, 5; 2 Tim. ii, 2.) to superintend their doctrine, (1 Tim. i, 3.) to judge their conduct, (1 Tim. v, 19.) and to regulate matters not settled by divine authority. (Titus i. 5; 1 Cor. ii, 34.) Most intelligent persons will allow that such an office, well conducted, must still be of high importance and of immense advantage.

The last book of Scripture, written when the church was in its most settled state, contained epistles addressed to one called *the angel*, whom the address to as an individual, and other circumstances, naturally led the mind to suppose to have been a single superintending minister. It is evident that at Ephesus there was more than one presbyter; (Acts xx, 17.) and that the angel or superintending minister had exercised a judgment over others who pretended to be apostles. Rev. ii, 2. This appears then a strong confirmation of the fact of a single superior minister, call him by what name we please, presiding over others, at least in meetings of the clergy. This has been allowed by candid Presbyterians.*

At the same time it cannot be considered as a point so clearly revealed, as that Christians, equally desiring to know and do the will of God, should not, from various circumstances, form different judgments. The author thinks episcopacy scriptural, and divinely ordained; but he dare not say that it is exclusively so, lest he be condemning the churches of Christ in Scotland, Germany, America, and other parts of the world, (in which there has manifestly and largely been, and still is, vital Christianity in a high degree,) without the clear declaration of the Scriptures against their system.†

It is, however, perfectly clear, and acknowledged on all sides, that God has appointed a distinct order of men for the

by no means of that consequence which some warm disputants would affect to make it. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

* "We see," Hornbeck justly remarks, "that the Apostles in their writings were far more solicitous about the *virtues* than the *degrees* of ministers; and more described and inculcated the *duties* that become that state, than determined the *form of government*."

* The Author would too far depart from the subject of the Treatise, to enter into proofs which might be drawn from the Fathers. Bishop Hall, and Stillingfleet, and Hooker, may be referred to. The genuine Epistles of Ignatius in the beginning of the second century, are in the Author's mind satisfactory and decisive. There are some valuable observations on this subject in Milner's Church History. See vol. i, page 161, and page 518.

† He enters fully into the observation of the the Rev. Basil Woodd—"It has been remarked, that the difference of sentiment which prevails among real Christians, does not respect essential parts of doctrine, but other points of a circumstantial kind, and of subordinate importance. Though I am not an architect, I can distinguish between a scaffold and a building; and though conscientiously preferring episcopal government as most scriptural, I rejoice to think that all these external concerns are but of a temporal nature, and that the various forms of discipline existing in the visible church, are but so many modes, which it pleases the great Head of the Church to permit and employ, in elevating the great spiritual building, composed of living stones, which work completed, the scaffolding will be no longer necessary." The remark of Professor Campbell is also calculated to lead all sides to see, that this is not among the great essentials of our common christianity. He observes, "Nothing can be conceived more absurd in itself, or more contradictory to the declarations of Scripture, than to say that a man's belief and obedience of the gospel, however genuine the one, and

ministry of the word, and that he by his Spirit specially calls them to this office. The Reformers insisted much on this divine calling to the work of the ministry. Bishop Jewell says, "They that enter into the ministry, must be allowed, not of men only, but of God. Therefore, whosever taketh that charge over the people, must look narrowly into himself, and see whether his calling be of God. If he have not a testimony that God has called him inwardly, all other outward calling is of small purpose."

Such being the divine appointment as to a peculiar order of men set apart for the ministry over Christians in general, it is manifestly very important that each should know and fulfil their duties towards each other. This is a large subject, and as it is but incidentally connected with this work, we can only give a few hints upon it.

We will begin with the office of *ministers*, and here chiefly confine ourselves to the words of Scripture, which are ever remarkable for brevity, fulness, and authority.

Their *character* "must be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, nor greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God? Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the Devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach." 1 Tim. iii, 1—7. And again, St. Paul shows, "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." He is to be a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, (2 Tim. ii, 24, 25.) coveting no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Acts xx, 33.

Their great *duties* are to give themselves as far as practicable to their ministerial work. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Acts vi, 4. The directions to them are such as follows—"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts xx, 18. "Thou, O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, patience, meekness; fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." 1 Tim. iii, 13. "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; neglect not the gift that is in thee. Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Tim. iv, 12—14.

Their more direct ministerial duties are thus laid down, they are to determine *to know nothing among* their hearers, *but Jesus Christ and him crucified.* 1 Cor. ii. 2. To *preach* Christ, *warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that* they *may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* Col. i, 28. "To feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." 1 Pet. v, 2. 3. They are solemnly charged "before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." To each it is said, "preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Titus ii, 1, 7, 8. The mode of preparing his discourses is

however sincere the other, are of no significancy unless he has received his information of the gospel, or been initiated into the church by a proper minister. Into this absurdity those run who make the truth of God's promises depend on circumstances no where referred to or mentioned in these promises."

described, Eccles. xii, 9. "Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of truth."

Their *reward* is not small. "When the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. v, 3. "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." Matt. x. 40. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all his goods." Matt. xxiv, 45—47.

Their *punishment* for neglected duty will be aggravated. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest them not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." Ezek. iii. 17, 18. "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." 2 Pet. ii. 1. 2. "Wo unto them .... wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Jude, 11—13.

Such is the scriptural account of the situation and duties of ministers. O that it may be written on every minister's heart, and influence his whole life! How contrary is all this to a worldly, trifling, gay, and easy life;* to a mere taste for elegance and literature; and still more to a covetous, preferment-seeking, or flattering spirit! to a proud, self-exalting, lordly carriage over the flock of Christ!

The Holy Spirit can make all that minister in holy things faithful teachers. O that his grace may largely descend upon them! Bingham has noticed that "The primitive teachers acknowledged their dependence on the Holy Spirit." Chrysostom says in one place, "that he expected the grace of the Spirit to souud in his mind; in another, "I do not think that I spake those words of myself, but God, who foresaw what would happen, put those words into my mind:" speaking of the preaching of Flavian he says, "It was not human thought that poured forth his discourse, but the grace of the Holy Spirit: as it was not the nature of the vine, but the power of Christ, that made the water wine." St. Austin also often speaks of such assistances of the Spirit in preaching; and especially urges prayer for this end.

There is much reciprocation between ministers and people: a good minister will in a course of years, raise up good people around him. A minister praying for his people, will find them praying for him. A preacher steadily and faithfully ministering among his people, will find it a help to their steady attendance upon him. Party or controversial preachers will make party or controversial hearers. The fruit springing up will be according to the seed sown. O how important that we manifest a right spirit, and sow the right seed among our hearers!

But all faithful ministers must expect opposition, contempt, and ill usage.—"The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." John xv, 20. They will turn all to good account. The very sins of those who abuse the Gospel, and the false doctrines of those who per-

* The Episcopal Church in America has strongly expressed its sentiments on this subject. At the Eighth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of Ohio, held June 3d, 1825, after stating that "the practice of mixing in the fashionable amusements of the world is inconsistent with the principles of Christianity, and has a direct tendency to check the progress of vital religion," it was resolved, "as the sense of the Convention, that it be earnestly recommended to the Members of the Church, to abstain from frequenting Balls, and other places of vain amusements, and that they likewise use their influence with their families and dependants, to induce them to abandon such practices."

vert it, enable ministers more fully to state the clear and full truth in all its parts. The spirit also in which ministers meet improper conduct in their hearers will often help to remove it. An attendant on an eminent minister began to think he got no good from his ministry, and became lax in his attendance. Complaining to a friend that he could not profit by what he heard, he was advised to go to his minister and converse with him. He did so; and after some conversation, explicitly told him that he found no profit under his ministry. The minister with great humility said, "I am not surprised at it. My only wonder is, that any human being should have been profited by such a poor ministry as mine is." This humble declaration at once overcame the hearer. He saw his own error. The veil over his own eyes was removed, and bursting into tears, he said, "O sir, it is all my own fault; I have been getting worldly and neglecting prayer, and that is the whole reason why I have not profited."

But we must not enlarge; there are important duties belonging to *hearers:* and as this is a day in which, from the peculiar circumstances of our times, the free character of our constitution, and the liberty of speaking and acting which we all enjoy, these duties are considerably disregarded, it may be desirable, in the spirit of love, to enter at some length into the duties of Christian congregations and Christian people toward their ministers.

The subject may be considered with reference to the duties owing generally by Christians to their ministers, and to those who are more especially owing by members of the established church to their regularly appointed pastor.

There are many general duties owing to ministers.

1. *To hear them.* To attend upon their ministry. If God graciously sends his ministers, it is obviously the duty of those around them to hear. We need not enlarge here, as the duty has been sufficiently shown. But it is not enough considered that this duty is binding in many cases where it is neglected. Ministers should be heard, where it is practicable, by their stated congregations whenever they preach.* But is not attendance upon them often a matter of caprice and momentary feeling? Do not sometimes such conversations arise as these—"Will you go to church this morning?"—"No; it looks cloudy"—or, "it is foggy"—or, "it is cold"—or, "it is hot"—or, "it rains"—or, "I am tired"—or, "Mr. Such-a-one only preaches—I will stay quietly at home and read a book." This is not right. Such excuses would not be made if a party of friends were to be visited. We allow that there are cases of sickness and delicate health which furnish a sufficient reason for not going under certain circumstances. We allow that very little children cannot be brought without disturbance (though there are advantages in accustoming children from early years to come) and that where they cannot come, some one must stay at home to take care of them; but the case may surely thus be put with fairness, and yet, if so put, how many will it condemn—that no impediment is a satisfactory objection which is not also found a sufficient impediment to keep you from taking those pleasures which require similar efforts. It is very discouraging to a faithful minister, to see empty pews and a thin, scattered congregation. At other times, such remarks as these are made—"There is an eminent preacher to occupy such a pulpit—there is something peculiar in such a place of worship; let us go there!" The being absent whenever a stranger is to be heard, does not show steadiness of Christian character. Times may be commonly taken for hearing strangers which do not interfere with regular (we should not say undeviating) attendance

* It is noticed of the excellent Sir John Barnard, a Lord Mayor of London, six times chosen Member for the City, and called the ornament of the human race, that he constantly attended twice every Lord's day to pay honour to his Maker in the great congregation, where he behaved with exemplary seriousness, hearing the preacher (though his inferior in knowledge of divinity, no less than in strength of intellect,) with evident signs of meekness on his countenance, and reverence for a mode of religious instruction appointed from above.

on a stated minster, or at a stated place. Roving about, among Christians, more than quite staying away, seems to be the prevailing evil. *Regular* hearing at stated places is of great importance; but there are those who err on the other side; they are always hearing, running after different preachers, and that to the neglect of duties. They have been compared to Pharaoh's lean cattle—always eating, but still ill favoured. *Patient* hearing is another part of the same duty; we see tokens of impatience when persons are turning round to look at the clock, or are manifestly restless during the sermon, or hastening out before the blessing.

To esteem them. Are not ministers, even when good men, sometimes slighted and neglected, not only by the ignorant and rude, but by those who from their situation in life should know better? If ministers do not happen to have commanding or popular talents, or great learning, or private property, they are put in the back ground and trodden upon. How contrary is this to the express direction of Holy Scripture!—"We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." 1 Thess. v, 12. Surely the very circumstances of a man's having fewer worldly commendations, will only be another argument with a generous and Christian mind for more special courtesy and attention. Is he a humble, patient, self-denying, faithful labourer? "receive him in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation." Is he defective in any point? remember his office, and you will act towards him as you would in the case of the failings of a revered parent. Even St. Paul had defects; and it is recorded in honour of the Galatians, "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first, and my temptation, which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected." Gal. iv, 13, 14. It must indeed be allowed that the worldliness of some ministers, and the extravagant height to which others, seeking their own glory only, have advanced the ministerial pretensions, have brought contempt on ministers in general; but we should distinguish between the office, and the men. It must also be admitted, that some esteem the minister that they usually hear too highly, so that if another minister happen to preach they are displeased, and will hardly hear him, thinking that they cannot profit by a stranger. While we allow the benefit of a regular ministry, we must not limit God to one instrument, lest we provoke him to withhold the divine blessing which alone enriches the soul. But with these admissions, still ministers in circumscribed spheres are frequently treated as inferiors, as idle persons who have plenty of time, and may be made to wait. Now as they are generally men of education, of study, and of devotion, so they have a quick sensibility of feeling; there is a refinement of mind which is deeply pained by improper conduct. Those offend against this who praise them to their face; who find fault with them harshly and severely; who bring rudely before them painful and unwelcome things that they know they cannot remedy; or treat them with an offensive familiarity. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father." 1 Tim. v, 1.

It is a very important part of this esteem not to listen to, or catch up, foolish, silly, scandalous tales, which are always afloat respecting any public character, and almost invariably originate in gross mistake, if not in entire falsehood. It is very injurious to propagate such things; and persons who do so are often unconscious how materially they may impair the effects of ministerial labours. The scriptural rule is, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." 1 Tim. v, 19. It is never expedient to give way to tittle tattle, even about a minister's real imprudences and defects. Preachers are *men of like passions* with others, and must not be expected to be angels. What if in despising the vessel you should lose all the treasure which it contains! 2 Cor. iv, 17. Form reasonable expectations respecting them. Do not think too much of them on the one hand; nor, on the other, expect too much time and attention from them. Ministers have a great

work; their studies call justly for much time. Do not then be disappointed if they do not visit you; and do not you waste their time and take up the valuable moments which belong to their studies by needless visits, nor by prolonging necessary intercourse. Some will pretend to come for advice, when it is manifest that they have made up their minds before they go. Is there not in many of these things a want of sympathy with them in their arduous work? yet let it be gratefully acknowledged by every minister, that there are those who are his daily *joy* and *crown*.

3. To *obey them*. Whatever they require, from God's word, comes with additional force and obligation, from its having been brought before us by his appointed minister. "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God." The express directions of Scripture on this point are very plain. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." Heb. xiii, 17. There is a laxity of sentiment on this point which was unknown to the primitive church, and it evidences a wrong state of feeling, and is seriously prejudicial to the soul. Do not even good men sometimes speak and act as if the Scriptures had not enjoined such duties as we have recited, and as if they were wholly independent? True it is, ministers must not be obeyed against, or beyond the written word; and true it is that we must judge for ourselves as to the principles of divine truth from that word, as the only ultimate reference: and we may differ from them in various particulars, and yet, differing with reluctance and prayer, still hear aright: but do not many think little or nothing of the obligation of obedience, where the minister's instruction is supported by, and founded on the word of God, and all his aim to make them conformable to that word? We shall have occasion to dwell farther on this subject in another part of this work.

4. *To provide for them*, is another duty of hearers towards their ministers. The Apostle Paul, who could the more easily speak on this point to those churches among whom he *used none of these things*, writes very decidedly on this point, and that at considerable length. 1 Cor. ix, 7—25. He declares, "So hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel;" and expressly tells the Thessalonians, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." Now, not to speak of the frauds and keeping back of just dues in tithes, by which many ministers are yearly robbed of that which is their right according to the laws of the land, it is evident, if these scriptural precepts were duly regarded, we should not have many ministers in the greatest difficulties for a maintenance, and others so scantily provided for, that, had they not private property, or other means besides the produce of their ministry, they and their families would actually want bread. In such a case as a late distinguished author, labouring as he did in such a city as London, and so scantily provided for as he was by those among whom he laboured, there manifestly was not the communicating *in all good things* of which the Apostle speaks, to the extent there ought to have been.*

5. *To pray for them*, is a still more important duty, and greatly pressed upon hearers by the sacred writers. How urgent the most successful of all ministers, St. Paul, is on this point—"Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you." 2 Thess. iii, 1. And again, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's

* Many curates in humble circumstances, and others, from want of information, are often without really valuable books. The author has known some excellent individuals in the higher classes, who have been eminently useful by gifts or works calculated to give their minister the best help—such as Richmond's Fathers of the English Church, Scott's Bible, Milner's Church History, Simeon's Skeletons, or, Horæ Homileticæ; or lesser works, as Biddulph's Essays on the Liturgy, Scott's Life, Wilberforce's Practical View, Baxter's Reformed Pastor, &c. &c. Such gifts have been abundantly repaid in the increased usefulness of their pastor.

sake, and the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Rom. xv, 30. And again, "praying always,....and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel." Ephes. vi, 18—20. There is hardly an Epistle without a request of this kind; (2 Cor. i, 11; Col. iv, 3; 1 Thess. v, 25,) a request that, coming from an inspired Apostle, in a letter to be the directory of the Church in future ages, comes with all the sanctions of a divine precept, to Christians in every age. Here then is a point of vast magnitude, both with regard to the usefulness of ministers, and the edification and comfort of their hearers. How often have you prayed for your minister? Does this come in every day's prayer? Can you expect to derive profit from his ministry without this spirit of prayer? Ministers are but God's instruments. It is not their genius, talent, or learning that is to convert your soul; nor their deficiencies in these that are to hinder your conversion; it is not their wisdom and piety that will save you; they are only the channels of good; the Spring Head is above. O, by faith and prayer for your minister, open the fountains of that unfathomable and exhaustless fulness, that may ever flow, replenishing your ministers, and descending in rich abundance to your own soul. The union of prayer in families and in social meetings is here specially important. Is the minister pious? what a help to his labours! Is he otherwise? what a means of making him all that it is desirable he should be!

We have now to consider those *duties* which are more especially *owing by members of the established church to their regularly appointed pastor.*

In considering these, it may be first expedient to show *the importance of an establishment.*

Surely it is right and scriptural for the government of a country to establish and maintain the Christian Religion in that form in which they conscientiously receive it. It appears nothing more than using the talent of influence and power which God has entrusted to them for the glory of his name. It is both a wise and a Christian course to maintain the form which they and the greater part of the community approve as most conformable to the Scriptures, and tolerate all others, consistent with good order and peace: the wisest governments have ever respected the rights of conscience.* The Scripture contains promises that most expressly show that governments shall maintain and support the Christian Church—*Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their Queens thy nursing mothers—Kings shall minister unto thee —Thou shalt suck the breasts of Kings*, and the like. The provision made in this country for the established Church of England, seems but the fulfilling of these promises.

Looking at it in this view, what a noble provision did the piety of our ancestors, and the zeal of Christians of former days, make for the spiritual wants of the people! The whole country is divided into parishes, and a church is erected in each parish.

Then, what care has been taken to preserve the purity of this church! The minister who is appointed to any holy office has to answer the most solemn questions before he is ordained. He has, in the presence of God and the congregation, to declare his determination by the help of the Lord to lay aside the study of the world, and of the flesh, and to give all faithful diligence to know and teach the word of God. A Liturgy full of devout and admirable prayers is provided to assist us in public worship, and in the course of that Liturgy nearly the whole word of God is read once a year, and the most important parts thrice a year. There is a spring of revival and restoration to first purity in these things of which the English Church has often found, and is now experiencing the benefit. In no church perhaps in the world is so much of the Holy Scriptures read, and all this is in general provided for by the government of our country, through

*Till Bishop Taylor's Liberty of Prophesying, and Locke's Letters on Toleration were published, the true principles of Toleration seem to have been very little understood.

the piety of our ancesters, without any expense to ourselves.

What an immense help is all this to the faithful ministry of the word! It places ministers at once on the most desirable vantage ground for declaring the truth. Sherlock, in his Treatise on Religious Assemblies, observes, "To enjoy the liberty of public worship near our own dwellings, without being forced to seek for it at a distance, would have been thought a great privilege in former ages, like the heavenly manna falling round about the tents of the true Israelites. Neighbours, members of one congregation, living near to each other, and conversing often together, may attain many importants ends of Christian communion, and have many advantages for strengthening, exhorting, reproving, and watching over each other. When the children, and servants, and inmates go to the same place with the head of the family, he knows that they are there, and they are encouraged and quickened by his example.

It has been objected to the Establishment, that the patronage to livings is generally in such hands, that it is not probable that pious and suitable men will be placed in them, but much more likely that eager, worldly and ambitious men, who stoop to flatter others, will obtain what retired and more deserving men lose. Patronage is a talent of immense responsibility; and we would rather excite a spirit of prayer for those to whom it is entrusted, than reproach those who abuse it. But we need not enter into a consideration of the way in which it is sometimes exercised; or notice the sins of the people, as one cause why God may permit it to be ill exercised; or remark, the property on which patronage was originally in most cases founded, was a voluntary contribution to the church by private individuals, and ask, Was it not reasonable that they who paid the expense should choose the Teacher? or can those who gratuitously obtain any benefit justly complain? Let us remember that, in fact, no human scheme is without considerable difficulties; nor can any plan be devised by man for securing in perpetuity an unexceptionable administration or a constant succession of able and pious ministers to the same place. The Churches of Geneva have declined from the Gospel; the once Presbyterian places of worship, in various parts in our own country, have become Arian or Socinian; and it has been abundantly seen, that every human device has fallen short of fully attaining the desired result. Are we then left without remedy? As it regards man's help, we are often left without remedy; and it is needful and profitable to feel this, to wean us from man and his wisdom and contrivances, and lead us more simply to God. We are not left without remedy in him. He only raises up pious Ministers; He only governs all minds, so that such ministers labour just where it pleases Him. He has the key of David; he opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens. We believe from experience, that the Holy Spirit never stirred up two or three constantly and perseveringly to meet together many years, and ask of God for faithful Ministers, without in the result obtaining the blessing to the place for which they prayed. Here is the only effective, here is the full remedy for the evil; "cease ye from man, trust in Jehovah."

It is not a sufficient objection therefore to the obvious benefits of an Establishment to say, that many ministers are unfaithful to their sacred engagements. The mal-administration of an institution by no means proves that the institution is wrong, for there is no institution that is not exposed, in our fallen world, to this evil, only the more excellent the institution is, the greater guilt lies on those, who, by ministering unworthily, bring unmerited reproach.

Nor is it a sufficient objection to say that "a minister is forced upon me, and I have no choice." There can hardly be a single congregation where some might not hold this language. There are a thousand circumstances in which you have been placed without your own choice; your parents, your birth, your native place, your education, your situation, and a variety of other things, have been fixed, more or less, without your option. You are not responsible for

God's providence, but for the right improvement of such advantages as he has graciously afforded you.

The grand remedy for these and similar evils, and for any imagined or real defect in the Liturgy,* is not any particular constitution that individuals may think to be altogether immaculate, but an enlarged spirit of prayer for the plenteous effusion of the Holy Spirit on the whole Church, and each individual branch of it. The Holy Ghost only sends faithful ministers to any church; and while men are looking at mere human agency, and disregarding his special office, how can their designs prosper? But let the more serious members of any church unite in prayer for this particular object and they may fully expect that faithful labourers will be raised up, by whatever human agents ministers may be appointed over us. And so, whatever may be the minor defects of our Evangelical Liturgy, let the Spirit of grace and supplication be in our own hearts, and those defects will be lost in the edification and comfort we shall receive in those devout and holy prayers with which the Liturgy abounds.

What a recommendation is it of the Established Church of this country, that martyrs were its founders, and some of the best practical divines have ministered at its sanctuary. With such men as Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Bradford, and Hooper, laying its plan, and such men as Hall, Hopkins, Beveridge, and Leighton, among its prelates; with Lord Burleigh, Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Addison, and Johnson, and an innumerable host of wise, powerful, learned, and enlarged minds among its members, and with the test of continuance for three centuries, the Church of England is surrounded with a glory and honour that may well claim the respectful attention of all Christians, and the affectionate veneration of all its members.

Observe the obvious blessings that have followed in the train of this establishment. Apart from its highest blessing, that of being a branch of the visible church in which innumerable immortal beings have been born again, made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, it has diffused, among all ranks and classes, a knowledge of the leading truths of revelation. It has been a bulwark, a constant standard of divine truth, and a rallying point for faithful ministers. It has been thus instrumental in maintaing a spirit of piety through our country, that has exalted our nation above every other, and made Britain the glory of all lands. Even those who dissent from it are infinitely more indebted to it, and pious ministers among them have readily acknowledged, that wherever piety flourishes in the Church, there the piety of Dissenters is quickened. By the mild and tolerant spirit breathed in its devotions, and professed in its Articles, a spirit of toleration is diffused through the land, and an unexampled liberty of conscience and worship prevails among us. Who can tell what would be the state of things in these respects, if the Roman Catholic, or any more exclusive and less tolerant system had the same pre-eminence?

In these things we may see something

* Mr. Scott remarks with great candour, "I believe there are many things unscriptural among us all; that is, either defective, redundant, or erroneous: but human nature is very fallible; ten thousand circumstances produce prejudices which warp the judgment; and the Lord seems to illuminate his people but in part. There must therefore be differences of opinion; these our corrupt passions will magnify into matters of importance; but when we are satisfied in our minds as far as circumstances will admit, that we are in the place, and worshipping after the manner that it is the will of God we should, we are not vainly to imagine that we can do much more, or that we can remove rocks and mountains, for it would be no less a work, if we could bring the state of the church, even in our own neighbourhood, from what ages have confirmed to what we think right, and at last, we are as liable to be prejudiced and to mistake as other men." He elsewhere declares, "A minister may officiate and labour in the establishment conscientiously and usefully, without being required to do any thing which he regards as unlawful; that is, with the views which I have of Christianity, and of the ministry," and speaks of being reconciled to the assent and consent to the whole of the prayer-book, required of ministers instituted to benefices, "by the consideration that it by no means is supposed to imply putting the prayer-book on the footing of the Bible, and by reflecting that many things are wrong every where." See his Letters.

of the importance and beneficial influence of the established church.* The maintenance and support of such an establishment is a most serious duty.

We address not members of other denominations. We fully admit that there are very many truly pious and conscientious Dissenters; we rejoice at the good doing among them, and by them; we pray that they may receive yet more abundantly the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and we admire and would reciprocally adopt the words of one of their own devoted ministers—"I feel a most sincere and encouraging joy in the growing number and holy eminence of those among you whom the world stigmatizes, and it is my heart's desire and prayer, that whatever may be unscriptural in all established and other churches, may not be brushed off by rude hands, or broken away by outward violence, but detected, to the conviction of upright hearts, by the light and grace of the Lord Jesus in his word, and purged away by the sweet and omnipotent influences of the Holy Spirit."

We are not now, however, speaking to Christians in general: nor do we address those members of the church who merely are such from state policy: nor those in authority, and with church patronage, who merely consult their family interests, and appoint unfit, wholly unfit men, because they happen to be related to them: nor those who being themselves prejudiced against the real principles of the established church, harass every minister who holds them, and throw all their influence and patronage towards the appointment of men of a worldly spirit, and thus bring all sorts of obloquy and reproach against the church.† Mr. Yates, in his able pamphlet, "The Church in Danger," has shown the practical wisdom of appointing pious, indefatigable, and exemplary ministers, in the case of two churches in London, a few years back almost empty, and both of them since attended by crowded congregations. He says, "The appointment of these two Rectors to the situations for which they have approved themselves so appropriately qualified, has more augmented the number of advocates, and more contributed to the support of the church of England, than all the controversies and defences of its doctrines, or all the legislative enforcements of its discipline that have appeared during the last half century." How prejudical to the real prosperity of the church is a contrary course! The instances have not been few in which, when a faithful minister has died, or has perhaps even been driven away, his place is immediately supplied by one of another spirit, and dissenting chapels have forthwith been erected and filled; and a lasting breach and division made: made primarily by this course of proceeding in those who profess to be wise and intelligent members of the church of England! What extended evil such conduct produces! what wide-spreading and lasting injury is done to the establishment! and what a tremendous responsibility rests on such persons!

But *we address pious and enlightened churchmen*, in private stations, on points which tend to weaken the influence and extent of that establishment, which has been such a blessing to the country, and we exhort them so to act as *to maintain this blessing*, and hand it down unimpaired to their children and their children's children.

The great difficulty with hearers from the beginning, has been their liking or dislikng of individuals, their partialities for one and against another. *Every one of*

* The Author has not attempted to enter at large into the subject. Those who wish for further information will find it in Jewell's Works, especially his Apology and the Defences of it; Strype's Memorials, and Lives of the Reformers; Whitegift's Answer and Defence against Cartwright; Fulke's and Bilson's Treatises; Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity; the writings of Bishops Hall, Hopkins, and Beveridge; of Stillingfleet, John Rogers, Maddox, Warren, Comber, Bennett, Nicholls, and many others. The Tracts of the Bristol Church of England Tract Society. Wilks's Correlative Claims, The Scholar Armed, a Tract by Robinson, entitled, A Serious Call, &c. and a Pamphlet entitled, The Evil of Separation from the Church of England, will be found useful to those who cannot procure more scarce or expensive works. In Milner's Church History, there are many valuable remarks on this subject. See especially vol. ii, ch. 17.

† See Chalmers' valuable Essay on Church Patronage.

you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ, was the complaint of an Apostle, which he strongly repels—*Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you?* and shows them that all mere men are nothing *but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man.* So it is now. If their own minister pleases the members of a congregation, they are often so partial and attached to him, as to hear no one else with patience. If they entertain a dislike to him, they cherish it, and manifest it far too strongly. If any new preacher of peculiar talent comes, there are those who are far too eager to run after him;"* and others are, to a lamentable degree, wanderers, roving from place to place.

To such, as Christians, we say—Beware of leaning on an arm of flesh, of trusting in man, or of glorying in man. To such, as members of the established church, we say—It is the very essence of the church of England to commit the charge of a certain district to a certain minister: he to look after it, and the people within it to look up to him. We have seen the benefits of the church, and approve of its constitution; but no benefits can be obtained without some sacrifice of private inclination; and we are not acting in the spirit of those who separate from it, when we go where we please, and choose our own minister, without reference to the appointments of that church? Is not in this way the system of the church of England breaking down among us, and that of the Dissenters extensively superseding it, even within the Church? Do parishioners in large towns in general feel any connection with their minister, the more for his being their parochial pastor? Many certainly by their conduct manifest that they do not, and thus, with them, all those good sentiments which used formerly to be of so much and such valuable influence, of the obligation to attend the parish church, are rapidly passing away. We may justly allow that these sentiments were carried by some to an extreme, so as to militate against some of the first principles of the reformation; but are we not now in danger on quite the other side?

The Author feels the delicacy and difficulty of the subject. The Scriptures very much insist on the duty of guarding against false teachers; we need only refer to the following passages—Deut. xiii, 1--3; Isa. ix, 15, 16; Jer. xiv, 14--16; Ezek. iii. 16--22; Micah iii, 5--7; Matt. vii, 15, 24; xxiii, 4, 5; xxiv, 25; 2 Pet. ii, 1--3; 1 John iv. 1. to prove this. With so many directions and cautions on this point, and with the affecting warning, that *if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the pit;* and with the important fact that we own the reformation to an appeal from false teachers to the word of God; we dare not but insist on and press the duty of every Christian trying the doctrine which he hears, by the written word, and being anxious to hear pure and scriptural doctrine. Christians have certainly a right of private judgment, and are charged *to take heed what* they *hear.* Mark iv, 24. While they are told, *Despise not prophesyings*, they are also told, *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good*, 1 Thess. v, 21, 22. They are exhorted, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John iv, 1. "This shows," says Mr. Scott, "that Christians

* The late Mr. Robinson in his Serious Call, observed, "those *professing godliness* have forgotten what they owe to their faithful pastors, and no longer yield them what is their due—attention, reverence, and attachment. The relation which formerly subsisted between the parochial minister and the people of his charge and which is calculated to promote the interests of solid piety, is now nearly dissolved, through the wildness of insubordination, which has broken loose among us. A contempt is shown for the sacred function, and for the most exemplary characters invested with it. In many cases, at least, no eminence of ability, no fidelity or diligence, no purity of doctrine, or holiness of life in the Parish Priest have been sufficient to secure to him the affections, even of the more serious part of his congregation; but they have departed from him in multitudes, on the appearance of a strange teacher, whose endeavours, as it afterwards appeared, were to unsettle and divide. Is this to obey the Apostolical directions? 1 Thess. v, 12, 13; Heb. xiii, 17. O beware that you do not weaken the hands, and grieve the hearts of those whom God is pleased to own in the work of the ministry, and who have a just claim on you for your firm support, and unremitted co-operation."

who are well acquainted with the Scriptures, may, in humble dependence on divine teaching, know for themselves who it is that preaches according to the doctrine of the Apostles, and who contradicts it, and that they are bound to make this trial of men and their tenets." This seems very justly to mark some limitations of private judgment. But is there not sometimes a passing beyond this, and an enquiry not merely—Is my parish minister a man of God, well *instructed in the way of the Lord?* but, "Is he most to my taste, and the most interesting, (not to say amusing) that I can reach?" We would only put this subject before the consciences of our readers for their own consideration; yet bearing in mind that there are cases of relationship, connection, particular friendship, or other circumstances of a strong kind, that may justly claim exemption from a common rule.

It must be considered, that though this is the duty of those to whom the power is committed, to appoint faithful, and to remove unworthy ministers, for the due discharge of what they will have to render strict account; yet the efficacy of a divine ordinance does not rest with the minister. Matt. xxiii, 2, 3. In the Old Testament we find that a whole tribe, that of Levi, was appointed for holy duties. In the New Testament, we see that our Lord sent Judas himself to preach the Gospel. Matt. x, 4. Bishop Beveridge justly observes, "Whether the minister be worthy or unworthy, it is still by the grace of Christ that his ordinances are made effectual. If Christ be pleased to withhold his grace, be the minister never so worthy, it cannot be obtained; and if Christ be pleased to convey his grace, be the minister never so unworthy, it cannot be hindered. So that he that receives grace from an ordinance, must not thank the minister for his worthiness, but Christ for his goodness: and he that receives no grace, must not blame the unworthiness of the minister, but the faithlessness of his own heart: for be the minister worthy or unworthy, if I come with faith *to* an ordinance, I am sure to go with grace *from* it."*

This has been the sentiment of Christian writers in early ages. Augustine, in his Treatise against the Donatists, shows at some length, that though the ministers were guilty of the crime laid to their charge, yet that was not a sufficient ground of separation from the church, and that the church did not cease to be a church because it communicated with wicked men, since either she did not know them, or else she bore with them to preserve peace. He affirms that there was always in the Church chaff and corn, that is, both good and wicked men; and that such will be to the day of judgment, which shall divide the good from the bad; that sometimes the number of the latter exceeds that of the former; that many cannot be driven out of the Church, because they are not known, and because it is convenient to tolerate some for quietness' sake, to prevent a schism which might be occasioned by cutting off from the communion those persons who might draw along with them several of the faithful."

In general, it may be said, Christians are sufficiently aware of the right of private judgment: but we fear that they are not aware of their obligations as members of a particular church to the appointed ministers connected with that church. There are, it is true, very trying cases, as there must be in so many thousand parishes, and among sixteen thousand ministers. Nor is it a matter of indifference what we hear. Truth is the proper nourishment of the soul. If

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* See his Exposition of the Twenty-sixth Article.

Cobbett, in his Treatise on Prayer, urges the same sentiment;—"Christ authorised the Twelve Disciples, and Judas among the rest, to preach the Gospel; (Matt. x, 4, 7.) and so as that if they came to those that were worthy, their peace was to come upon them, even all kind of bliss to their souls. Let the preacher be unworthy himself, yet, if the hearers be worthy, their peace comes on them. The Gospel and Gospel Ordinances are the power of God to salvation to the believing hearer and partaker, be the Minister regenerate or unregenerate."

it be mere moral precepts on the one hand, or theoretical notions on the other, it is not Christianity. The native appetite of the new-born soul is for Christian truth; pure, scriptural truth, in all its parts, both doctrine and precept; and this it must have. As David, when hungry, ate the show bread, so the hungry soul must have truth. Preaching the word is God's ordinance; but if it be not his word, but human notions and inventions that are preached, it ceases to be an ordinance of God. If there be a well of brackish and bad water in my own yard, and a good well in a neighbour's, I am glad to get water at his well. Yet, on the other hand, there must be a limitation, a wise limitation, to the right of private judgment; and we should ask ourselves, How much judgment have I to use? We come to hear as learners, and not as judges.

Taking these things into consideration, let us endeavour to illustrate the subject by various practical cases that occur.

Suppose, first, the worst case. The minister is *unfaithful in his sermons, and immoral in his conduct.* He preaches not Christ, and yet is full of envy and strife. Phil. i, 15. Here even, enquire, first, how far you are a partaker of his sins: have you attended to the direction, "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye?" Matt. vii, 5. If immoral, have you warned him? have you reported him to the ordinary?* have you taken any steps towards the removal of such a man?† have you even prayed perseveringly for any length of time for him? Supposing that you have done your part to rectify so serious an evil, I dare not say that you should attend such an appointed teacher; I dare not forbid your attendance on a neighbouring pious clergyman. You and yours need to hear the truth. Bishop Jewell (on 1 Thess. v, 13, 14.) says, "What shall we say of them that labour not, that do neither teach, nor exhort, nor reprove, nor correct, that have no care to do their message, and no regard to the people? what may I say of such? God himself says, "They are dumb dogs, that cannot bark; that lie and sleep, and delight in sleeping; they all look to their own way, and their own advantage, and every one for his own purpose." Christ calls them thieves and robbers. They are unsavory salt, profitable for nothing, but to be trodden under feet of men. "Wo is unto me," says Paul, "if I preach not the Gospel." Wo to the servant that wraps his talent in a napkin, and increases not his master's gain. God grant such idle and slothful ministers grace to know their office, and do it; if not, God give the people grace to know them, and to shun them, and to fly from them." But still, do not lose sight of the relation in which you stand to your parish minister. Respect his office. Show him all courtesy. Cease not every effort for bringing him to a better mind. God can yet make him a burning and a shining light. If ministers fail in their duty, we must not fail in ours. We all pray too little for those we perhaps justly disapprove. We all look too little at our own sins as the cause of our evils.*

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* The *Ordinary* means one who has ordinary or immediate jurisdiction in Ecclesiastical matters in any place. In this sense Arch-deacons are Ordinaries: but the word is more frequently applied to the Bishop of the Diocese.

† The twenty-sixth Article says, "It appertains to the discipline of the Church, that enquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed."

* Bradford delightfully manifested the true Christian spirit at a time when the Roman Catholic superstitions were again re-established, under Queen Mary, by looking at his own past sins as the cause, and thus humbling himself before God: "To go to mass, and sacrings, with such like idolatry, I have been a great time more ready than now I am to hear thy word, and use thy sacraments as I should do: thy ministers I pray not for; thy church I am not careful for; no, not now, good Lord! when wicked doctrine most prevaileth; idolatry, superstition, and abomination aboundeth; the sacrament and sacrifice of thy dear Son is blasphemously corrupted: when for preaching there is nothing but massing; for catechising, censing; for reading of the Scriptures, bell-ringing; for singing of the Psalms and godly songs to our edification, all is done in Latin with such notes, tunes, ditties, and descants, that utterly the mind is pulled from the consideration of the thing (if men did understand it) unto the melo-

Suppose another case: *a minister moral in his outward conduct, and you think him legal, or antinomian;* ignorant, or unsound; uncharitable, or controversial in the general course of his ministry, and perhaps worldly in his spirit.* It may be well again, first to inquire within, and see whether you have good ground for such a judgment, or whether the fault be not in yourself. A legal hearer may condemn a minister for antinomianism, who is only faithfully preaching the gospel of Christ. An Antinomian hearer may condemn a minister for legality, when he is only insisting on practical religion. A man of literature may condemn a preacher for ignorance, because he has not himself studied the Bible. And so with regard to other supposed faults, we should never forget our Lord's question, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam in thine own eye?" Matt. vii, 3—5. Other circumstances are also to be taken into consideration. In the established church we have this immense advantage, that the prayers are always evangelical and spiritual, and a very large proportion of the Holy Scriptures is always read in the public congregation, so that you can never be entirely destitute of the truth. A man's situation may be so leading and prominent, that his defection from the parish church, and going to another church, may materially injure his general usefulness, and cause greater evils than any personal loss. Or a person may be so connected with the minister as part of his family, or related to him, or dependent on him, that it would be a direct act of hostility not to hear him. Experience has shown that the souls of Christians have eminently flourished where they have given up personal advantage and comfort, out of tender consideration for the feelings of others, and earnest endeavors to do the most good on the whole. Again, there may be no neighbouring church where you may have the advantage of hearing the truth: now with regard to attending worship among other bodies of Christians, the late Mr. Hey justly remarked, "The hearing of a good minister is not the whole of religious duty. To hear regularly, I must become a member of some particular community that may require of me things with which I cannot conscientiously comply: or I may have a large family to educate in some religious persuasion, which may have great weight in the choice of my communion." Let these things have their full weight on your mind; consider them in prayer before God; consult experienced Christian friends; and then decide as conscience shall direct.

But circumstances may be such as to allow of a choice, as in large parishes where there are many churches. The choice here should be a matter of prayer and deliberation. Especially desire and seek after the faithful, practical, and holy minister who will do your heart good; who will rouse and quicken, warn and exhort, instruct and build you up in the Gospel of Christ. God knows your exact state; look to him for guidance; and when you have fixed, *regularly attend.* Mr. Newton remarks, "Unsettled hearers seldom thrive; they usually grow wise in their own conceits, have their heads filled with notions, acquire a dry, critical, and censorious spirit, and are more intent upon disputing who is the

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dy; all which my wickedness has brought in; my profaning of this commandment, and my not praying. Thy ministers are in prison, dispersed in other countries, spoiled, burnt, murdered; many fall, for fear of goods, life, name, &c. from the truth which they have received, unto manifest idolatry; false preachers abound among thy people; thy people, dearly bought even with thy blood, are not fed with the bread of thy word, but with suillings; Antichrist wholly prevaileth; and yet for all this, alas! I am too careless, nothing lamenting my sins which be the cause of all this. O dear Father, forgive me for Christ's sake, and be merciful unto me; and as of thy mercy thou didst give me time to repent, so give me repentance." I cannot but strongly recommend to all my readers, the invaluable writings of this Reformer in the sixth vol. of "The Fathers of the Church."

* The Author uses these terms for the sake of brevity. By *legal*, is meant, making our own obedience, either in all or in part, the ground why God should confer salvation upon us: by *antinomian*, making the salvation of Christ to consist only in deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin; and disregarding its invariable and inseparable connection with a holy life, and obedience to the law of God.

best preacher, than upon obtaining benefit to themselves from what they hear."

Suppose again a minister *faithful*, but *untalented*, dull, and perhaps tedious: still, what is the state of your own heart? Do you say, There is one in a neighboring parish, or in a dissenting meeting, who interests you more: but your own parish minister allowedly preaches the truth; attend him, then, and look more simply to the Lord for his blessing. Remember the general benefits of order and of the established Church. Sacrifice something of taste and feeling for the general good. The spirit of wandering is very bad; it destroys pastoral unity, and cuts up that sympathy which should ever subsist between a minister and his people. Wanderers are not thrivers in the Christian life themselves; and their examples are injurious to others. Go regularly to one minister and one place; and while you are depending on divine teaching, your soul shall flourish under the divine blessing. It has been observed, even by those who dissent from us, "Be sure you do not mistake the true nature of spiritual edification, in thinking that nothing edifies but what either pleases our fancies or raises our sensitive passions. Such qualifications in ministers should be the ground of our choice and esteem, as are truly ministerial, and most adapted to answer the great ends of the ministry; and after all, we must expect more from it as the ordinance of Christ, than barely the performance of a man, though ever so wise and skilful, pious and faithful. By overlooking the institution of God, and having, too, raised expectations from man, we provoke him to blast the most promising means. On the contrary, a weaker ministry is often greatly blessed when it is the best persons can conveniently and regularly enjoy, and is attended from a sense of duty to God, in obedience to his commands, and in a dependence on his presence and blessing."

Suppose yet another case—a minister is *faithful in his doctrines, but his conduct or his temper does not correspond to them.* It is a case provided for by our Lord, Matt. xxiii, 2, 3,; "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." St. Paul showed a conformity to the spirit of this when he said, "Some preach Christ even of envy and strife; not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and I do therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Phil. i, 15. Surely, if he rejoiced in their preaching, though their spirit was bad, others might and did hear with advantage what they preached; though it is not said that he advised attendance on such. There are probably cases of this kind where one would be more reluctant to attend than where there was less knowledge, but more sanctity of character.

But suppose one case more, that you have the happiness to be in the parish of which the clergyman is *a faithful and well-instructed Minister of the New Covenant.* You have here every motive for continuing to hear, and in general such a minister has large and attentive congregations. Yet even here the great enemy is vigilant to hinder the progress of the truth. If such a minister have not popular talents, he will often be slighted. It is also a striking and an affecting fact, that while those who live at a distance make many self-denying efforts, and come in all weathers to hear, those who live in the immediate neighborhood, and have every advantage and facility, too often neglect all their privileges, and make some objection or other, to justify themselves in this neglect. O be not fastidious, and slight not your greatest privilege, because it may be easily attained. There is many a soul hungering for the bread of life, that would be filled with joy and gratitude for such means as you neglect. Are you sincere in your profession of attachment to the established church? do not then so act as to weaken and destroy that system which has been so large a blessing to the country.*

* There are other cases arising from want of church room, which, in the present state of many parishes, it is impossible to meet; one can only hope that it is an evil which will by de-

But besides hearing the minister, there are, in connection with our duties to him, other important things to be attended to, some of which have already been mentioned, and some will be more fully considered hereafter. There is one point more that the present state of the church pecularly presses on our attention.

Hearers should *co-operate with their minister in his various plans for the good of the parish*, and promoting the religious institutions which may have been formed in it. A load of secular business in many places falls on a minister, from which he might be relieved by judicious, educated, and pious laymen. Such men, in schools, in the forwarding of religious socicties and the care of their accounts, and in larger parishes in visiting the poor and the sick, might very materially, and do in many cases, very effectively aid their minister. Much more might be done through our country than is done, by the humble, prudent, and zealous co-operation of laymen. What a mass of ignorance, and darkness, and prejudice, and misery is to be removed from the minds and dwellings of millions, even in favored England! Two or three individual ministers placed in some cases over ten, or twenty, or thirty thousand, or more inhabitants, are utterly inadequate to discharge all that important work which, apart from all temporal, the spiritual interest of so many immortal beings justly requires. It is delightful to see the progress of building fresh churches in all large places, and much will be done by this means. But still much will remain to be done by judicious and pious laymen; and wise and faithful ministers, deeply sensible of the magnitude of the ministerial work, will rejoice to call in such help. Till this be more generally done, the Church of England will not maintain its ground against the indefatigable zeal and ceaseless efforts of members of other communions: nor shall we, as members of that church, duly discharge our duty to God, and the sacred trust which he has committed to us, of maintaining it and handing it down unimpaired to our posterity.

In conclusion, let me address fastidious hearers, and negligent ministers. *Fastidious hearers* are little sensible of their spiritual privileges in this day, in any part of such a country as this. Think of the state of your forefathers, once wretched idolaters; think of the days of popery, when for professing Protestant principles you would have lost your life; think of hundreds of millions still living in pagan darkness; think of the countless numbers whose hearts would overflow with gratitude had they half of your present advantages; and O fear lest in despising them, you forfeit them, and be left destitute forever. You deserve not the advantages which you have, nor are you likely to have more, till you be brought to a humble, meek, and lowly state of mind, simply looking to the divine mercy in Christ Jesus for the pardon of your past unprofitableness, and for all requisite supplies for your spiritual necessities.

Nor can we close this chapter without appealing to the consciences of those *clergymen who neglect their sacred duties*, live in the world, give way to unholy tempers, or preach mere moral essays, or mere controversial theories. We would say, in a spirit of affectionate concern, See how you trouble the minds of your hearers and people, and drive them to that which they cannot, and do not approve! O remember our Lord's solemn warning, particularly applicable to you—"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which

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grees be remedied by the measures which happily are now in progress for this purpose under the government. Had the members of the Church of England had greater facilities for erecting places of worship, and a large degree of the patronage of the places which they erect; had they had something of the same facilities which Roman Catholics, Socinians, and every other body of Dissenters have, there would have been an almost infinitely larger body of attached members to that Church through the whole country, and there would hardly in any parish have been want of church room, or of zealous ministers to fill the churches. A groundless fear of opening the door to doctrines, merely imagined to be injurious to the establishment, has been one grand cause of the increase of the multiplied bodies of Christians now separated from that establishment. It is most probable that the British parishes were first formed, and British churches first built and endowed, by that system of private benevolence and piety, in lords of manors and others, which some in power seem now above all things to dread as injurious to the establishment.

believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Wo unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Matt. xviii, 6, 7.

An old writer in the days of Queen Elizabeth uses stronger language, and emphatically says, "Little shall be their comfort in their reckoning who, in their watch towers, sing sweet songs to sinners, and flatter them in known evils; that suffer them in their swearing, in their gaming, abetting them in their usury, in their sabbath breaking, in their profane contempt of the doctrines and teachers of grace, warning them of nothing so much as of their being too precise, too forward, and too religious, as the greatest danger and extremity that they can run into. Such watchmen are traitors to the Church of God, and souls of men, and no sort of men are more serviceable to the Devil than they are."

The address of Bishop Beveridge to such characters is very striking—"Thou that callest upon others to love God as the best of goods, and to hate sin as the worst of evils, wilt thou hate God as if he was the worst of evils, and love sin as if it was the best of goods? Thou that preachest to others to leave the world and follow Christ, wilt thou leave Christ to follow the world? Thou that preachest a man should desire God above all things, wilt thou desire all things above God? Thou that criest to others, *Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?* what! wilt thou rather die than turn? Thou that sayest, Covetousness is idolatry, and drunkenness bestiality, wilt thou fall down to the one, and make a beast of thyself with the other? Thou that showest others the way that leads from hell to heaven, wilt thou thyself go the way that leads from heaven to hell? Thou that warnest others to beware of misery and to labour after glory, wilt thou neglect that glory and cast thyself headlong into misery? And thou that holdest the door open to others, wilt thou shut it upon thyself? Certainly it is the greatest aggravation in the world that any sin can be invested withal, even to have it committed by one whose office and work it is to destroy it—he cannot fall but he draws many after him."*

CHAPTER VII.

Directions for Hearing the Word.

The subjects of the Christian Ministry are truths of immense moment. Our total ruin by nature, our awful danger, our utter inability to help ourselves, the astonishing love of the Almighty in giving his Son to die for sinners, the free and full salvation provided for the guilty, deliverance from the divine wrath, with its tremendous issue in eternal ruin, and restoration to peace with God, to holiness, to eternal life and glory; such subjects demand a consideration suitable to their unutterable magnitude. But there is this additional reason for regarding and receiving them—our future, our final happiness depends on a cordial reception; our future, our final, our eternal loss, must be the result of a wilful and persevering rejection of them. Our Lord gives a solemn admonition on this very point—"Take heed, therefore, how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

What motives to hear aright have you here, both in the promise and in the threatening! The promise assures you, *to him that hath, shall be given.* He that disposes you to hear aright, and retain what you hear, shall multiply his blessings on you. Your delight in, and obedience to, his word, shall be a sure evidence that you belong to Christ, and are going to his glory. While you are thus hearing, he will replenish you with his grace, and in the very use of the means your soul shall be quickened, nourished, and strengthened. Sometimes, indeed, God magnifies the riches of his grace in the unexpected and sudden conversion of

* See Beveridge's Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles. Article 26.

a notorious sinner; but ordinarily "he only visits with the power of his word, those who humbly wait to know what he would have them to do, and sends unqualified hearers not only empty, but hardened, away." And as his riches are inexhaustible, so he is never weary of enriching his sons. One truth duly received, shall prepare the way for another; that for a third, till they come to the *measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* They shall *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ*, till they appear in Zion, and are *filled with all the fulness of God.*

But how solemn is the threatening to those who neglect to hear aright—*Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.* Negligence in hearing is the sure way to lose all the advantages which you possess. All the means of grace thus unimproved will be taken away. Thus God sent upon Israel a *famine of hearing the word of the Lord.* Such a famine is, as we have shown, the worst of all famines; for it is the inlet to every other evil. All our fancied knowledge, gifts, and attainments, shall be found of no avail, where there is not inward religion, a heart sanctified and devoted to God. They who bury their talent in a napkin, shall have it taken from them. They who hide their light under a bushel, are in danger of being left in outer darkness, destitute of every thing, save the distressing and agonizing remembrance of wilfully and irrecoverably lost opportunities of attaining the highest blessing, and escaping never-ending sorrow; save the torturing reflection that all their present misery, with the sad prospect of its eternal duration, was brought on themselves by a wretched choice—that of refusing duly to hear aright.

Hearing the word aright is then a duty of vast importance; and a duty which it will be desirable more fully to explain. The Church of England, ever alive to man's insufficiency, beautifully states this duty in a prayer in the Litany—"That it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit." The same duty is fully summed up in the following answers in the Assembly's Catechism—"It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer, examine what they hear by the Scriptures, receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind as the word of God; meditate, and confer of it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruits of it in their lives."

But let us enter more particularly into our Lord's direction, *Take heed how ye hear*, in the way of practical rules, only bearing in mind, that while the grace of the Holy Spirit blesses the word to our real good, that same Spirit prepares the heart to receive it aright, and gives suitable dispositions that we may hear with profit.

We will first show what is to be guarded against in hearing; then explain the nature of due hearing; and lastly, give some practical directions that may assist us thus to hear.

I. The precept "*take heed*," teaches us to *guard against those dangers to which we are exposed.* Let us consider in what respects we should take heed:—

1. *Take heed to your motives in going to hear.* What is the object which you have in view? There are many unworthy ends, such as curiosity, criticism, entertainment, or even mere general information about religious topics. These are not the ends at which we should aim. Hearing is not to gratify men's curiosity, but to save their souls; yet it is rather some novelty that attracts most men's attention than the simple statement of the most solid truths. If there be a funeral sermon for any public character, crowded congregations will attend, and eagerly listen to those parts which relate to the individual; if there be a missionary sermon, those parts which contain facts relative to the heathen will excite most attention. If we may judge of men's motives by their conversation, some come merely like the Athenians, to hear something new; some to know what will be said on any particular doctrines by the preacher, or to be able to talk about him, and his style and manner of preaching:

others come rather to see what is passing than to hear; but "to enter the house of God, to have our eyes and ears entertained and not our hearts reformed, must certainly be most displeasing to God." Inconstancy of attendance is frequently connected with this spirit, and such lose the benefits of that full course of divine truth which regular hearers attending one ministry receive. Let us, like the poor man at the pool of Bethesda, who patiently waited many years, and at last was blessed by the Saviour, patiently attend the ministry of the Gospel, and we shall also doubtless receive a blessing. The preaching of the word is an act of grace proclaiming infinitely more than the remission of human penalties, or any temporal evil; it proclaims God's favour to sinners for their eternal good. Shall we spend the time in criticism, curious remarks, and the like, when we should be eagerly listening to the message, following its directions, and embracing its blessings?

Take heed of *inattention*. There is often a dulness of hearing very prejudicial to all success in attending upon the ministry. It was the case with the Jews of old. *Hear*, says Isaiah, *ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see;* and St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, notices the same thing—"Ye are dull of hearing, for when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Heb. v, 11. Such are not dull as to temporal things; but of spiritual things they say, *what a weariness is it!* Mal. i, 18. They have similar feelings to those who asked, *When will the new moon be gone? that we may sell corn; and the Sabbath? that we may set forth wheat?* Amos viii, 5. It is observed by Craddock, that "A minister may have a great congregation, and yet but few hearers, if their minds be stuffed with the world before they come; if they bring their trades, their bargains, their plough, their worldly business along with them. David says of idols, *They have ears, but hear not.* We have too many such idols in our congregations." Some are asleep, even when they have no bodily infirmity to plead: what a dishonour do they put on religion! what an infectious and evil example to others! what contempt of the presence of God! The Bible records one instance in which drowsiness had nearly been followed by irrecoverable death, to be as it were a warning to all sleepers. When Paul was preaching at Troas, "and continued his speech until midnight, there sat in the window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep; and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell from the third loft, and was taken up dead." There seemed some excuse for drowsiness at so late an hour, and during so long a discourse; but the record seems left not merely to evidence the divine power in his restoration to life, but also to be a caution against that which brought him into danger. While every allowance should be made for natural weakness and infirmities, which disable some from that attention which they desire to give, and which it is their grief and burden that they cannot give; while we would give to such every advantage of our Lord's kind remark, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*, yet such should remember his question —*What! could ye not watch with me one hour?* And here much might be done by moderation in food, or by taking a short rest at home previously, or perhaps by standing up part of the time. But there are those who, though they have no natural infirmity, seem, as soon as the sermon commences, to compose themselves as if they designed to sleep through it. O let such remember the majesty and dignity of the great Jehovah in whose house they are assembled! How can they receive a message from him, or obtain the gifts of his Spirit, or the riches of his grace, in such a drowsy state of mind! Some manifestly attend so carelessly and negligently, that what is preached, can hardly be profitably received by them. If they are not thinking of something else, they yet think no longer of what they hear, than while the words are sounding in their ears. Let these things be felt and mourned; let them discover your alienation from God, your ruin and depravity, and thus lead

you to be earnest in seeking divine grace. Attention is absolutely needful to profitable hearing; just as while the mouth of the vessel is closed, it is in vain that we attempt to fill it, by pouring any liquid upon it, so inattention effectually closes the ear and prevents the reception of knowledge, however abundant the instruction given may be! Lose not all your labour and time in coming to hear. When Samuel attends to God's voice, and says, *Speak, for thy servant heareth*, then he receives the revelation of the divine will. 1 Sam. iii, 1—14. In the time of Nehemiah, on the revival of religion, it is said, that *the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.* Nehem. viii, 3. And so in the time of our Lord it is said, *all the people were very attentive to hear him:* Luke xix, 48. Do you wish to be preserved from inattention? remember the importance of hearing, and the danger of negligence. It helps attention to look at the minister, and is an indication of it; *the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on our Lord*, when they were eagerly interested. Luke iv, 20. Remember also, that the spirit of attention comes freely from God our gracious Father: "The Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." Acts xvi, 4. "The Lord turns away the eye and ear of sinners from seeing or hearing vanity, causes his voice to be heard, cures the spirit of slumber, and awakens out of sleep, that he may give light and life."

Take heed of *prejudices.* Some come to hear with their minds filled with their own notions. They have adopted high doctrinal views, and cannot bear to have practice insisted upon; or, on the other hand, they dislike to have the doctrines of the Gospel prominently brought forward, and had rather hear moral disquisitions on the excellence of virtue, which never trouble the conscience, nor renew the heart. They have an undue partiality for or against particular individuals. Prejudices may arise from various causes, from education, the opinion of others, early associations, and the like. But the love of sin, and the want of a holy submission to the mind and will of God, are the principal causes. Prejudices may be taken up against the very best of ministers. Jeremiah had to complain in his day, (Jer. vi, 10.) "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear! Behold, their ear is uncircumcised that they cannot hearken! behold, the word of the Lord is to them a reproach, and they have no delight in it!" The Jews were prejudiced against our Lord Jesus Christ. They were offended with him on account of the meanness of his birth, (Matt. xiii, 57.) and therefore he could neither do any mighty works, nor preach the Gospel among them. Often on this account they rejected his words. We have a remarkable instance of this, Luke iv, 16—30. Every thing seemed hopeful and promising in the commencement of that discourse; the subject was full of consolation; they were deeply interested, (ver. 20.) they "all bare him witness, and wondered at his gracious words;" and then Satan injects a prejudice, *Is not this Joseph's son?* Our Lord meets the prejudice by appealing to sentiments common among themselves, and to the history of their fathers; but still, so powerful was the stream of prejudice, that the very means employed to abate it, only swelled it the more; and though our Lord was the preacher "all they in the synagogue were filled with such wrath," that they sought to destroy the Lord himself. Thus they rejected his Gospel, and perhaps perished for ever. There is a great difference between being *cut to the heart*, (Acts vii, 54.) and being *pricked in the heart.* Acts ii, 37. O let us guard against those prejudices which may ruin, and cultivate that broken and tender spirit which will ever advance our eternal interests. Prejudice is sometimes marked by strong partialities in little things. The Jews were more willing to hear Paul in the *Hebrew* tongue; but when he had once mentioned his being sent to the *Gentiles*, their indignation was so excited, they refused to hear a word more. The angry Pharisees were quieted by his saying that he was a Pharisee. Acts xxiii. While the preacher speaks agreeably to the hearers' own opinion, they will attend, but will not regard him farther. O what self-conceit,

and self-ignorance and folly, is there in this! They expect the preacher should not preach simply the truth, but what will please them. Thus it was that Balak sent for Balaam. Numb. xxiv, 10, 11. They wish him to bless and curse, not as the truth is, but according to their prejudices. but there are those on the other hand, who place such implicit confidence in the words of their teacher, as to receive every thing on his credit, without examination or reflection. This is making man their confidence instead of the divine word. The plain, practical, self-condemning, and heart-exposing instructions which they receive, offend and prejudice some, so that they cannot bear to hear. What a contrast to this was the spirit of Eli, who, looking beyond the instrument of conveying the distasteful and painful truths which he heard, fixed his eye on the great Governor of all, and humbling himself under the conviction of his own just deservings, cried out, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good!" 1 Sam. iii, 18. It is the gracious office of the Holy Spirit to remove prejudices from the mind, and therefore the Apostle prays, that the Ephesians might have given to them "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened.

Take heed to *put away your sins.* This direction is needful even for Christians. The Apostle James, speaking to those begotten *with the word of truth*, that is, truly regenerated and converted by the Gospel, tells them *to lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness.* The term *filthiness* denotes those lusts, appetites, and sins which defile the soul, such as, all gluttony, drunkenness, excess, and uncleanness; all eager pursuit of worldly things,* needless indulgence of the body, covetousness, and earthly-mindness. These things, under whatever name the world may sanction them, are to be laid apart as exceedingly opposite to truly receiving the word of God. The more our heart hankers after, or desires, or relishes such things, the less we are disposed to regard divine truth. They are like superfluous and hurtful weeds that take up the room of other things, and render the soil unprofitable; they hinder the reception and growth of the good seed. Then *all superfluity of naughtiness*, the overflowing of malignity, as self-will, pride, and hatred, equally hinder the due reception of the word. Yet the regenerate man is not free from such temptations, and the inward working of the heart after such sins. St. Peter, speaking also to those born of God, tells them to lay *aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.* These things are to be put away with godly sorrow for our natural corruption, and much care and earnestness.

Take heed of your *many spiritual enemies.* Our Lord, in the parable of the sower, shows that *the Devil comes and takes away the word from the heart*—that in time of temptation men fall away from the truth—and that the cares, riches, and pleasures of life choke it. These are spiritual enemies that would rob our souls of all profit from the word of life. Be assured that Satan will unceasingly try both to keep you from hearing, and to hinder your profiting when you have heard. Divine grace calls God's servants to many a vigorous effort, to break through obstructions. Consider all that would turn your heart and mind from the truths declared to you, as an enemy to be vanquished. Any discharge of needless worldly business; any unusual feasting; any talking of your own carnal pleasure; any unnecessary joining in worldly society, or reading trifling books, especially such publications as Sunday or other newspapers, on that holy day on which the word of God is specially to be heard, will assuredly be giving many advantages to our spiritual enemies. Self-righteousness is another adversary, the more dangerous because it is the least suspected. This leads us to imagine that when we have attended to hear, we have done something meritorious before God, and so

* I know one good man who has found it a most beneficial practice, to put aside all the ordinary employments of the family after six o'clock on Saturday evening; the needles of the ladies, and the dolls of the children are laid aside, and every preparation is made for giving all the Sabbath, as much as may be, to its holy duties.

we rest in the mere external ordinance. O how often do these things make spoil of the spiritual benefits which we might otherwise receive! A request to take an *innocent* walk in the fields; conversation with idle company, neglect of retirement; these, and the like things, are occasions and means by which our great enemy takes away the word from our hearts.

II. Before we give directions for hearing aright, it may be useful to explain *the nature of due hearing*.

The due hearing of the Gospel consists in far more than the mere outward attendance on the ministry of the word, and taking an interest in what is heard. The Scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Jews in general who rejected our Saviour, often attended upon him, and heard him, and witnessed his mighty works, and yet were not blessed thereby; but rather, by their perverseness, turned their privileges to their greater condemnation. They knew what he said: his words were plain and intelligible enough; but they cavilled at them, and rejected them. Some, indeed, heard him with pleasure for a time; yet when his doctrine opposed their carnal notions, they went no more with him. And so in our day we see multitudes living in this favoured Christian land with immense privileges. O that they would avail themselves of them, and duly improve them! But we see some deriving no benefit though they hear, some wholly shutting their eyes to the light which God has given, and others by infidel publications blasphemously reviling the only way of salvation, and madly casting away from them with indignation the only remedy for all our wo. In these things we have some remarkable testimonies of Scripture verified. In Ezekiel xxxiii, 31, 32, it is said, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness: and, lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words, but they do them not." In Jeremiah, (xliv, 16.) we have an instance of daring rejection of this word: "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." And so in the time of our Lord he had to declare, "They seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive."

All this shows that due hearing is more than attending to hear. It includes a sure belief, and a conduct corresponding to that belief, springing from the grace of God.

When we rightly hear the words of Christ, there will be a *sure belief* of them. Our Lord commended this in Peter who had declared, "Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God." They believed the divine testimony, they looked up to Jesus as a Divine Instructor, and humbly and gladly received his doctrine as from God. The same sure belief should be yielded by us to the word of Christ. It is far more important to know Christ with the eyes of the understanding than with those of the body: *Blessed*, says our Lord to Thomas, *are they that have not seen me and yet have believed.* Believing what you hear, so as to rely on the word of God as what cannot deceive, and beholding the glory of God in the person of Christ, and the mind of God in the doctrine of Christ, mark the blessed man.

There will also be a *corresponding conduct.* Thus the Apostles not only believed, but left all and followed Christ. They obeyed his voice. It became the great object of their lives to fulfill the will of Christ. Their faith worked by love, and overcame the world. So will it be with us if we truly believe. We shall know how to prize our many privileges, and be deeply concerned duly to improve them. The different parts of divine truth will produce some suitable effects in our lives. The glorious character of God will inspire us with reverence and confi-

dence, with love and self-devotion. Our danger through sin will lead us to the only refuge. The promises will fill us with hope, and joy, and gratitude, and the precepts will be to us a daily guide and rule of life.

And this is the result of *special grace.* When Peter made that decisive confession of his faith, recorded Matt. xvi, 16, our Lord said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Here only is the true root of all the difference between the most devoted believer, and the most presumptuous rejecter of divine truth. It is not that one is naturally better than another, or has more merit and deserving in himself; but it is of the distinguishing grace and mercy of our God. "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them." Prov. xx, 12. This is true not only in a natural, but also in a spiritual sense. It is *given* to the disciples of Christ *to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.*

III. We now proceed to the *directions which may assist you to hear with advantage*, only again stating that there is no direction which a gracious Father is not ready to enable us to follow, and which it is not a privilege and a blessing to fulfill.

1. Hear *in the spirit of prayer.* Of all the directions that can be given, this is the most important; for no other can be practised without the help which prayer obtains. The power of the Lord alone gives us understanding. Luke xxiv, 45. David was well acquainted with divine truth, and an inspired prophet himself, yet he often prays for divine teaching. Remember then at all times, the need of prayer; *the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. God* alone *giveth the increase.* Knowing and feeling this, we should go to hear his word with a praying heart; we should listen with many a secret ejaculation that God would send home what we hear to our hearts; we should return praying that we may keep what we have heard to our spiritual and eternal good. Useless are all rules and directions as to our real good, until the Holy Ghost gives them life and power. On this point then may our hearts be deeply impressed. Pray for the minister; he can only teach you as God teaches him: ask that he may have truly the gifts of the Holy Spirit, may know himself, and be enabled to declare to others, simply, wisely, and with power, the whole counsel of God, ever preaching such truths as may be to the benefit and salvation of your soul. Every faithful minister earnestly desires the prayers of his people, and is ready to say with the Apostle, "Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mysteries of the Gospel." It is prayer that causes *the word of the Lord to have free course.* 2 Thess. iii, 1. The excellency of the power is of God, and not of us. Pray for ourselves. God only opens the ears of men, and it is only by his grace that you can hear with any profit. O neglect not to seek that grace. Is there one in fifty that prays in private for a special blessing on what he hears? They are not profitable hearers, who are not constant worshippers. Let us seek and expect the divine energy of the Holy Ghost. The word of Christ is the sword of the Spirit, and it is only efficacious when it *comes in demonstration of the Spirit and of Power.* When we are duly sensible of our own utter insufficiency to get any profit, even by the divine remedy of the Gospel, but as the Holy Spirit teaches and helps us; when we despair of our own wisdom, and strength, and look, in fervent, and persevering prayer, to the blessed spirit alone, as the only one who can efficaciously help us; then are we likely to find the Gospel the power of God to our salvation. How suitable for us the prayer, (Job xxxii, 34.) *that which I know not, teach thou me.* Pray that the Holy Ghost may himself teach you your own insufficiency. Be assured that no natural wisdom, or humanly acquired knowledge, no merely human learning, or powers, or talents, can enable you to profit by hearing without the Holy Ghost. When the word came *with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*, then it came *with power and much assurance.* This gift is obtained by

prayer. O look for it, supplicate for it, and you shall receive it. It is important after hearing, as well as before: Saul, after seeing the vision, was employed in prayer. Acts ix, 11. And not merely hear in the spirit of prayer for yourself, but let all that hear with you be thus remembered. And should you receive any good, be not forgetful to render glory to Him to whom it is due. This rule condemns those who come into church when the prayers are half over. There are cases where persons are unable to do more from their peculiar circumstances; but where this is done without a sufficient reason to excuse it, such persons cannot expect to receive any good: how can they, who throw a public slight on those prayers which express our dependance on the divine blessing, receive that blessing?

2. Hear in *simplicity of mind.* The doctrines of the Gospel are *revealed unto babes.* Come, then, with a dsiposition to be taught. Really desire to be made *wise unto salvation.* Come to hear with singleness of heart, earnestly desiring to know, and do the will of God. The word will be profitable to the simple-minded and the sincere Christian. "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word." 1 Pet. ii, 2. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii, 3. "The way-faring man," (one whose whole aim is single and sincere, looking only to arrive at the end of his journey,) "though a fool, shall not err therein." Your simple object in hearing, should be, to have your errors and mistakes detected, you ignorance removed, your sins put away, the will of God discovered to you, all holiness promoted in you, and your soul blessed with all spiritual blessings in the use of those means, which God has appointed for conveying them. Let there be this blessed simplicity of intention in hearing, and though the world may despise, the Lord of all will bless. O that we may all desire to receive the word with the same simplicity that we desire our daily meals, and have as earnest and keen an appetite for spiritual food, as a hungry man has for the food of the body.

3. *Hear with candour.* The sacred historian records it to the honour of the Bereans, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica: they were of a more ingenuous and candid spirit. The original word, *ευγενεστεροι*, signifies, *well-born, sprung from a noble family.* It seems to intimate that they were more like their father Abraham, who willingly and gladly received and obeyed the divine message. The Bereans did not at once conclude every thing to be false, which did not agree with their preconceived opinions. They were not the slaves of prejudice. It has been well remarked, "True dignity and nobleness of spirit, greatly consists in an enlarged and unprejudiced mind, open to conviction, willing to investigate the truth, to examine the evidence adduced in the support of men's opinion, and to treat religious enquiries with candour, seriousness, and diligence. Such an ingenuous and teachable spirit comes from above." Let it ever be borne in mind, that there is naturally no true nobility of heart in man. The Bereans could not boast of any naturally better disposition; but the Lord graciously prepared their hearts, and their whole conduct was such, that they equally avoided "a blind credulity, an obstinate bigotry, and a heedless, conceited incredulity." Let us seek after the same candid, and truly Christian temper. Without it, we shall perpetually be stumbled, rejecting truths the most sacred, and imbibing errors the most delusive.

4. Hear with *seriousness.* When Moses had delivered the divine testimony to the children of Israel, he said, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day,.....for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life." Deut. xxxii, 46. The Apostle tells the Hebrews, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Heb. ii, 1. A serious mind should be cultivated previous to going to the house of God. Is the word of God your life? consider how you listen, when a physician speaks to you about your own health, or about the health of your children, or beloved friends: how carefully you notice and follow his directions.

If any great worldly advantage is mentioned as to be attained, how you listen to the account! how it dwells on your mind, and you think of it over and over again, and love to talk about it. So seriously and earnestly should you listen to the word of God, eagerly attending, lest, to your personal and lasting injury, you lose any valuable direction. Your salvation is too serious a matter to be trifled with. Remember, that God is very serious in sending his ministers to you; they are, if faithful, very serious in prayer for you, and in entreaties with you; the Holy Spirit is very serious in pleading with you, and the work of your salvation is the most serious work in which you can possibly be engaged. Surely we should listen to God's word with a reverence and seriousness, equal to that with which we listen to the request and direction of our highest earthly superior! A pious minister said, "I find that an endeavour to maintain a serious mind on the sabbath, is greatly blest. As means by God's blessing maintain a serious mind, so it in return, gives the same blessing to means."

5. *Hear with gladness.* A readiness to hear is another important part of preparation. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Of the Bereans it is said, *They received the word with all readiness of mind.* One cause of men's being given over to a spirit of delusion is, that they receive not the love of the truth. 2 Thess. ii, 10, 11. The first Christians received the word gladly. Acts, ii, 41. A heart prepared of the Lord, eagerly and gladly welcomes his gospel. Be willing to hear. It is the reluctance and backwardness of the natural heart, to receive the humbling, holy, and sanctifying, though truly joyful doctrines of the gospel, that hinders its success. We are offended, and we cavil; we dislike, and we object to, the bread of life, after which we should hunger; and turn away with disgust from those waters after which we should thirst. How different the Bereans, who heard with *all* readiness! The late Mr. Richardson well observed on this point,—"Persons stirred up to serious thinking about their souls, who were before ignorant of God and themselves, and unacquainted with the real nature of every Christian doctrine and duty, must, *as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.* What I have heard called 'a spirit of hearing,' unavoidably attends the revival of practical religion in all places. They must, they will seek the light and instruction of which they feel the want. To obtain it, they will break through every barrier, and cast aside prejudices against Dissenters, Methodists, and unauthorized teachers of every sect and name. Like persons dying of hunger, or parched with thirst, they will be ready to swallow the most homely, disgusting, and unwholsome food, and greedily drink water out of the dirtiest ditch. The life of the soul can no more be maintained without spiritual food, than animal life without eating and drinking. The direction, *Let every man be swift to hear,* is full of importance, and indicative of that state of mind which God delights to bless. Here is the best preparation for a cordial reception of the truth. O that such a readiness to hear may be largely granted to all professing Christians, and be met by a wise and full declaration of the unsearchable riches of Christ from all the ministers of his word! We see a beautiful example of such readiness in Cornelius's family: and O that congregations of hearers could say as he said—"Now are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." An old writer says, "It will appear that we esteem God's ordinance when we shall for the sake of it neglect our profit, hazard our outward peace, seem careless of our credit, strain our purses, and part with all for it."

There have been seasons when men have heard as if they were in earnest to be saved. In the time of the great plague in London, in 1665, those ministers who remained among the people, and preached to them, were eminently blessed. One who himself ministered at this time, thus described it:—"Now there is such a vast concourse of people in the churches, where ministers are to be found, that they cannot many times come near the pulpit doors for the press, but are forced to climb over the pews to

them ; and such a face is now seen in the assemblies, as seldom before was seen in London ; such eager looks, such open ears, such greedy attention, as if every word would be eaten which dropt from the mouths of the ministers. If you ever saw a drowning man catch at a rope, you may guess how eagerly many caught at the word when they were ready to be overwhelmed by this overflowing scourge, which was passing through the city. When death was knocking at so many doors, and God was crying aloud by his judgments, and ministers were now sent to knock, cry aloud, and lift up their voice like a trumpet: then, then the people began to open the ear, and the heart, which were fast shut and barred before ; how did they then hearken as for their lives, as if every sermon was their last, as if death stood at the door of the church, and would seize upon them as soon as they came forth ; as if the arrows which flew so thick in the city, would strike them, before they could get to their houses ; as if they were immediately to appear before the bar of that God, who by his ministers was now speaking to them. Great were the impressions which the word then made upon many hearts, beyond the power of man to effect, and beyond what the people before ever felt, as some of them have declared. When sin is reproved, O the tears that slide down from the eyes! when the judgments of God are denounced, O the tremblings which are upon the conscience! When the Lord Jesus Christ is made known and preferred, O the longings and openings of heart unto him! When the riches of the Gospel are displayed, and the promises of the covenant of grace are set forth and applied, O the inward burnings and sweet flames which were in the affections! I hope, not a few were born again: a strange moving there was on the hearts of multitudes in the city: and I am persuaded that many were brought effectually to close with Jesus Christ, whereof, some died by the plague with willingness and peace ; and others remain steadfast in God's ways unto this day."*

* See Gillies' Historical Collections, vol. i, p. 220.

6. *Hear in faith.* The Israelites in the wilderness having no faith in God's word, lost the promised blessings. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. iv. 2. You would not dishonour your bosom friend, or a reverend father, by distrusting his word ; have then a generous confidence in God; have a sure conviction that he will not deceive you. All his threatenings must be fulfilled ; all his promises shall be exactly accomplished. The precepts of the God of power, wisdom, and love, cannot fail, if obeyed, to make you happy. His invitation to you, to partake of his mercies, however rich, and full, and free, those mercies are, they are all made in truth. O believe them, confide in them, and rely upon them. Observe how children entirely trust their parents, and leave all consequences with them ; and how the babe clings to its mother, and draws nourishment from her ; so let us trust our far better, even our heavenly, parent ; so let us cling to, and embrace our Saviour Jesus Christ, and receive our supplies from his inexhaustible fulness. When Christ is preached by the minister, faith should be so exercised by the hearer, that he should be ready to say, as the Eunuch did to Philip, *I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.* There are many hindrances to be overcome, in receiving and obeying the word of God ; but faith will carry you above the opposition and enmity of the world, and will quench the fiery darts of Satan our great enemy. When you hear, therefore, of the divine anger ; believe and fear, lest you should endure that anger, and fly to him, *who has delivered us from the wrath to come.* When you hear his promises, believe them, and embrace them, and thus ensure to yourself an interest in them. "To hear and not believe," says Dr. Owen, "is in spiritual life, what to see meat and not eat, is in the natural ; it will please the fancy, but never nourish the soul." You *may* expect to receive a blessing. If it be not your own fault, you shall not attend without spiritual good. Consider what God has promised. Look at the declarations, that *the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that*

believeth; and this his *word shall not return void*, and hope for, and desire these blessings. Look to be more deeply convinced of sin; more clearly enlightened in the knowledge of the divine will; more strongly and practically impressed by the truth; more comforted and rejoiced; and more thoroughly confirmed and established in the ways of God. In short, go in the spirit described, Isa. ii, 3—"Let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways."

7. Hear in the spirit of *self-application.* There are many who are very ready to think all that is said applies to others; or are thinking how it suits their friends. When Peter, after our Lord's address to him, turns and asks about John, *Lord what shall this man do?* he received a just reproof, *What is that to thee; follow thou me!* John xxi, 21, 22. The application of the seemon to ourselves is the first step towards receiving benefit. Are not many merely regarding the style and manner of the preacher, or the system and theory which he holds without once thinking that they are personally concerned, and that life and death is set before them? But at the same time, this self-application requires judgment and discrimination. There are those who make a wrong application. If secure and careless, they will apply to themselves all the characters of the righteous, and all the comfortable promises made to such characters. If anxious and desponding, they appropriate in like manner to themselves all the descriptions of the wicked, and the threatenings made to their sins. Thus some speak to themselves *peace and safety*, when there is no peace for them in their present state; and others speak terror without a cause, and make their hearts sad, when the Lord designs it not. Now the true remedy for these evils, is to examine more carefully into their own characters, and ascertain their real state; and, above all, to pray for the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, who alone wisely and efficaciously applies divine truth, so as to regenerate, sanctify, and gladden the heart. Some are apt to think that the miuister meant to preach to them in particular, because his sermons happen to touch their consciences and describe their character, and they are offended. But this almost invariably is a total mistake. A wise minister will avoid preaching at *individuals* while he makes a point of laying open *character*, so that all present may discern themselves, and the *consciences* of each *may bear witness*, and *the secrets of his heart* be *made manifest.* Where a person thinks that the minister has been informed of his particular case, ordinarily he knew not of such a person in the congregation: but, O let the faithful testimony of conscience, thus speaking plainly to you, not be trifled with. Hear personally and individually, and you shall receive a lasting blessing. At least, give the word this consideration, What if it should be true! if this should be my state!—if I am in this danger!—if that danger should be thus tremendous!—such a thought has led to the conversion of the soul.

8. Hear in *humility.* God has called us "to receive meekly the ingrafted word," James i, 21. He has promised blessings to "those who tremble at his word. Isa. lxvi, 2. He requires that we should listen with reverence to his Son. Matt. xvii, 5. It is infinite condescension in the great God to address thus repeatedly and graciously, fallen man. Let our humility and reverence in some degree correspond with his astonishing grace. Cultivate, then, a meek and docile spirit. The Bible not only comes from our Creator, but displays much of his glory, and we are but poor ignorant creatures of a day; let us then, as it becomes us, receive this truth in a humble and lowly heart. Our natural hearts are not only careless and inattentive, but also proud and captious; and it is only grace, through much humbling experience, that makes them lowly and teachable. With a meek spirit, a man will not at once quarrel with what he hears, however it may appear to him mysterious and inexplicable, but will wait, in the posture of a learner, for clearer light. Instead of objecting to an awful denunciation, he will tremble at it; instead of doubting a gracious promise, he will desire an interest in it. Sensible of his own ill-deservings, and great de-

pravity, convinced of his own ignorance and weakness, he feels the need of a revelation like the Gospel, full of mercies, and gladly receives it in its length and breadth; in all its doctrines, however contrary to the carnal mind, and however offensive to the proud heart; and in all its precepts, however strict, and however opposed to his self-indulging pleasures. Bearing in mind our guilty and ruined state, even remembering our own innumerable blessings and demerits, let an abased, lowly, contrite spirit mark our hearing. Let us listen as to words "whereby we may be saved. We are lost and undone; the Gospel is a system of recovery; but it is either a savour of death unto death, or a savour of life unto life, just as it is received. A man feeling his ruin is humbled; a man in real distress gladly receives aid. The minister speaks not in his own name, but in the name of the great God. "Where the word of a king is, there is power." Eccles. viii, 4. Though it be then contrary to your natural inclination and to your previous views, remember, if it be the word of God, it cannot be despised with impunity, and there must be an immense blessing in humbly receiving and obeying it. In few things do we more manifestly exhibit want of reverence to God, than in slighting and despising his word; in few things does that humility and lowliness (which in his sight are of great estimation) more shine, than when we unfeignedly submit to and reverence his declared will and his revealed word.

9. *Compare all you hear with the written word of God.* This was the practice of the Bereans. Even when an inspired Apostle preached, they "searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so." Acts xviii, 11. Nothing has any divine authority but as it comes from God, or is according to his word. Yield your mind up then to the plain will of God, and to nothing else. Have a simple regard to his authority. As long as we receive doctrines merely on the word of ministers, we build our faith on human opinions, and it may be shaken by other human opinions; but when the Holy Scriptures are made the sole foundation of our faith, and we compare all we hear with the word of God, and receive it only as it is drawn from that pure fountain of divine truth—we have then a divine testimony, and build on that which, like its Divine Author, is not variable and cannot be shaken. We are bound, as reasonable and accountable creatures, thus to form our own judgment of what we hear, and not to take our sentiments only on man's authority. That authority may justly demand from us patient consideration, but not unqualified submission. All the fathers and ecclesiastical writers put together do not form the rule of judgment—God's holy word is our final judge. The apostle doubtless wished the Galatians, in considering either him or an angel from heaven that should preach another gospel, accursed, to form their own judgment on what they heard. Let us have a high reverence of the Divine Word as the only umpire in sacred truth; let us be well acquainted with it, that by it we may try the spirits; 1 John iv, 1. We may otherwise be misled by deceivers and false teachers, and take that for the word of God, which is indeed only the fancy of an ignorant, as well as fallible creature. But perhaps you object both to hearing, and believing what you hear—the variety of opinions to be found among preachers, and the possibility of being deceived by dependance on them; or even say, "Scarcely two of them are of a mind, and therefore my resolution is, I will believe none." You forget that there is a divine rule to prove *all things*. Hieron, an old writer says, "It is not the counsel of the Holy Ghost, because there is a spirit of error in the mouths of many, and the best learned may mistake, therefore cease to hear, but because it is thus, be sure to try." 1 Thess. v, 21.*

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*He farther adds, "Try what you hear by the work it has on your soul: the whole Scripture specially aims at three things—humility, comfort, and obedience. 1. To abase man in his own eyes, and to lay him in the dust. 2. To refresh his soul, and to bring his bones, which have been broken, to rejoice. 3. To frame his heart to a constant desire and care to please God. The doctrine which tends to further these three is true; that which is an impediment to any of these three must be rejected as unsound."

10. Hear in the spirit of *obedience*. The directions of St. James (chap. i, 22—25.) on this point are very express. We shall have to consider them more fully in another place. Hearing is not the end of our attendance on the ministry; it is but a means of assisting us to practical obedience, and it is a vain thing merely to hear, and learn our duty, if our lives never be the better. Determine then that you will, by the grace of God, practise all that is delivered to you by his ministers from his word. Often ask yourself, How can I best discharge the duties that have been brought before me? How can I most carefully shun the sins that have been pointed out? Submit yourselves, your souls and body, your estate, your family, all you are and have, to God's holy word. Often lift up your heart in secret ejaculations, while hearing, with reference to this end—"Lord, write this law on my heart!" "Lord, teach me to do thy will!" If you hear in a spirit of obedience, you will hear with a desire personally to obey. You will not be thinking of others, and be wishing, "O that such a one, my relation, my neighbour, my master, or mistress, or servant heard this, it just suits them!" let your thoughts rather be such as these—"O let me take heed how I hear, that I may obey; this reaches my case—*here* I am guilty—*here* I must amend my ways—I am *the man* concerned—let me begin to practise this duty, to believe this promise, to rest on my Saviour, to seek his Holy Spirit, and to aim at his glory in all I do!" Thus shall we receive the best profit by hearing. "If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God." John vii, 17.

Prayer before hearing.

O most gracious Jehovah, the Fountain of light, and the Giver of all wisdom, and my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, I render to thee my grateful thanksgivings for the light of thy truth, and the many spiritual advantages which thou hast given to me.

Open, O Lord, I beseech thee, mine eyes, that I may know the hope set before me. Open mine ears to hear thy truth. Thou hast said, The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord: O do thou then prepare my heart to hear. It is careless and unimpressed; it is hard and stony; it is too often filled with worldly thoughts, and vain and sinful passions; O Lord, create in me a clean heart. O Lord, make my heart soft, and tender and humble, that I may receive thy word with all readiness of mind and meekness of spirit.

O give me thy Holy Ghost largely and fully. May the blessed Spirit be my teacher, and sanctify me by thy truth. Give me grace to desire the sincere milk of the word. Give me a simple faith in every part of thy revealed truth, and an unfeigned submission of mind to it.

Lord, help me to hear in the spirit of prayer, of faith, and of love. Sanctify my memory to retain, and my affections to embrace thy truth. Remove far from me all prejudices. Deliver me from the love of darkness, from besetting sins, worldly fears, and whatever may obstruct a cordial reception of thy holy will. Give me a childlike spirit, that I may be teachable and humble, and give full credit to all that thou my heavenly Father hast said.

O heavenly Father, my tender and compassionate God and Saviour, let me not be satisfied with the word merely, or the outward reception of the promise: but may I receive Christ Jesus, the only Lord and Saviour, into my heart, and be filled with his Spirit, and enjoy that blessed fellowship which all thy people have with thee and thy blessed Son Jesus Christ.

And let thy word have free course and be glorified, not only in my soul, but among all that shall hear that word, and in every place, till it be known and received through the whole world, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Importance of reflecting on what we have heard, with a Prayer afterwards.

This part of the hearer's duty is so essential to his real profit, and so gener-

ally neglected, that we shall be excused for giving it a more distinct consideration. If we rest satisfied with mere hearing, without reflection, we shall never attain pure and undefiled religion. A person may hear and admire at the time, and yet be merely interested for the moment; if he think not of it afterwards, he will not be the better but the worse for hearing. Every time the truths of God are declared to him, they make less sensible impression, and leave a less practical influence upon him; he may be less and less moved, till he becomes totally unimpressible to the most solemn and affecting truths. While on the other hand, if by divine grace he duly reflect on what he hear, he will become more alive to the power of truth, more softened under its impressions, and more influenced by it in his whole spirit, and character, and conduct.

It is a striking description of the Virgin Mary's mind, on hearing what the shepherds told her, "She kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." We should endeavour to follow her example, desiring the memory to retain, and the heart to meditate on the truths concerning Christ. They are worth keeping and pondering in the heart.

But it is to be feared that Christians but very little attend to this duty. Let this enquiry be put by each reader to his own conscience—What is my practice after hearing the word? Do I make it a point of duty to ponder and meditate on what I hear? Do I ordinarily give a stated time for this?

Certainly, many return home to their family and friends, and enter on general conversation, or reading, totally unconnected with what they have heard. Some take up a weekly journal to pass the time, and others a trifling book; and so, in one way or other, all good thoughts are soon dissipated, and the sermon has, perhaps, hardly once after it was heard, received a passing reflection. Is it not the case with too many, that the mere act of hearing is that with which their minds and consciences are satisfied; and that the practising what they hear is a very inferior consideration? They desire, indeed, to be interested, quickened, and excited while they hear; but are careless about a conformity of life to the doctrines and precepts. The time after hearing is a most critical moment, as it respects our salvation. The word may then become effectual to our eternal good. The seed has been sown; God is ready to give the blessing. O let us seek it; let us not by impertinent visits, worldly business, or secular pleasures, lose the rich, the invaluable blessing.

The importance of this subsequent reflection and improvement will appear, if we consider why we come to hear the word. No considerate person can surely be so ignorant as to come with the self-righteous idea of obliging God, as if He were indebted to us for coming. Hearing separated from practical influence, is neither commendable in itself, nor acceptable to God; it is in truth mere self-deception, and tends only to our ruin. Matt. vii, 26. The intelligent Christian hears, in order to be made wise unto salvation, or in order to be quickened in the Christian life.

Now in order to be made wise unto salvation, more is necessary than merely listening to the voice of the preacher. If you neglect to think on what you hear, your mind will be little informed and enlarged, and your heart will not be sanctified. Subsequent thought and reflection, is that which turns it to our real nourishment. The Apostle tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xv, 2. "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. By which also ye are saved, if ye hold in memory what I preached unto you." O why should you lose all the time, and care, and efforts to attend to hear, and never be really better for it all! As you value then your eternal salvation, meditate on the word; let it not carelessly pass from you; but recollect it, and bring it by prayer and reflection into your heart and life. Or, if you desire to be quickened in the Christian life, the mere sound of the minister's voice, or his most fervent discourses, however excellent or pathetic, or eloquent will not do this. It must be permanently impressed on the heart by the blessed Spirit, through subsequent reflection. One sermon duly

improved in this way, will do more real good, than hundreds of sermons heard carelessly, and thought of no more. Meditate then in private, on what you hear in public, if you would be quickened and animated in the good ways of the Lord.

But how is this general direction to be reduced to practice? We proceed to give a few plain directions?

Seek to *improve yourself also by private study.* The time allowed for public preaching and hearing, though invaluable, is necessarily very limited: and unless the advantages thus given us be improved by private study as well as reflection, we shall make comparatively but very little progress in divine knowledge.

Though a poor man has not much time for reading, yet in the long winter evenings, and on Sundays, he can generally get a little leisure; and though the Bible will ever be the pious man's favourite book, yet if he has opportunity and ability to procure them, he should read other books to inform and impress his mind.

The Christian in the middle ranks of life should also pursue a larger course of study. Do not most persons take up their religious knowledge far too cursorily and accidentally, even when their views are in the main correct? and hence are they not apt to be driven about by every wind of doctrine?

We advise you after hearing, to make it your aim to *recollect* what you have heard. Some for this purpose take notes during the sermon: though we would not condemn this practice, where persons have found real benefit from it; it has, it is to be feared, a tendency to divert the mind from self-application, as the minister proceeds. The practice of others to write down when they return home, the heads of the sermons, and the most important practical parts cannot fail to be useful. But at any rate, enter not, if possible to avoid it, into worldly company and conversation, immediately after the sermon. This drives away what we have heard from our minds. As early as may be, we should seek to recal what has been preached to us, that it may be fixed in our memory. Endeavour to remember, at least, the leading divisions of the discourse. It is recorded of our good king Edward VI. that he took notes of the sermons which he heard. Why should you not find as much advantage in keeping memorandums of what you hear, for your spiritual benefit, as in the world, men do in making notes of various things which they would otherwise forget, for their temporal advantage. The Apostle says, *ye are saved, if ye keep in memory,* if ye hold fast, what I preached unto you. What an indescribably-important "*if!*" A forgotten Gospel saves not. See how St James condemns the forgetful hearer. James, i, 22-25.

Besides recollecting, *meditate* upon the truths; ponder them, weigh them, and judge of their real value. Enter thus into their real excellence. We are told of the righteous, *His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.* Weigh, then, by meditation, the importance, of what you have heard, and consider how far it relates to you, and how you may bring it into your daily practice. Without this, a multitude of sermons may be all in vain, and much instruction still unprofitable. One sermon may drive out another, and not a doctrine be really believed and felt, not a precept obeyed. Such a continual hearing, with a wilful neglect of subsequent consideration, produces by degrees hardness of heart, and a seared conscience. It has been remarked, that more people are undone in reference to both worlds, for want of considering what they very well know, than for want of knowing what concerns their real welfare. It is not merely the quantity of food which we take that makes our bodies strong, but the proper digestion of what we eat; and more suffer from too much, than from too little food And so with our souls, it is not merely the quantity of instruction which is given to us, that makes our soul strong, but the due consideration, and self-application of what we are taught. The Apostle connects meditation and divine teaching, *Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.*

The homily on the scriptures thus expressly describes this duty—"Let us with fear and reverence lay up in the chest of our hearts these necessary and

fruitful lessons; let us night and day muse, and have meditation and contemplation in them; let us ruminate, and as it were, chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort, and consolation of them; let us stay quiet, and certify our consciences with the most infallible certainty, truth, and perpetual assurance of them. Let us pray to God, (the only author of these heavenly studies,) that we may speak, think, believe, live, and depart hence according to the wholesome doctrine and verities of them."

It would help to fix what we hear in our memory, if we were to *converse* with others, in a *practical* way, on what we have been hearing. Why should not the members of a pious family converse together on the truths which they hear, as worldly men do on those things which delight them. This would fix them in your minds; the beneficial recollection would continue, and each would be stirred up to excel in spiritual wisdom. There is no need here to guard against a criticising of what has been heard, either in the way of admiration of man, of praise, or of censure, and of applying it to others, and not to ourselves. Such conversation after sermons is as common as it is unprofitable. But if our hearts are really interested in godliness, we shall feel what we have heard; we shall exhort one another to attend to it; we shall provoke one another to love and good works; and thus we shall grow in spiritual wisdom, strengthening each other's remembrance of what the minister has declared from the word of God, by our mutual recollection, and confirming it by other parts of that word. Was not David's conversation of this character? *We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company.* Ps. iv, 14. In some families, there is a good practice for one member of the family to put in writing full heads of the sermon, and to let it be read over before family prayer in the evening. Such a practice must greatly help the minister's labour and the hearer's profit. It must also be a benefit to those members of the family who were prevented hearing. It has been observed, "If attendance on children, or other necessary occasions, cause us to keep our servants at home, when others are busied in the service of the church, we should do our endeavours to supply the loss of public instruction, by our private admonitions, and by rehearsing at home those good directions which we received in the public ministry." With this should be joined, questioning the children of the family, and their being instructed in some catechism.*

View the subject brought before you with reference to practice. Each doctrine or duty which may have been treated of in the sermon, should be practically considered as it affects your future conduct. Has the subject of the minister been the law of God in its purity, excellence, and extent? let it suggest these thoughts—I see how guilty I am, I feel that I cannot be justified by that law which I must acknowledge to be just and good; how great my ruin; how immense the necessity of a Redeemer and Sanctifier! Let me go to him without delay for pardon and strength. Has the subject been our salvation by the death of Christ? let it be thus improved; O how evil is sin that required such sufferings from a Being so glorious; how great God's love; let me thankfully part with every thing that would hinder my obtaining an interest in so great a salvation! Has the subject been our fallen nature? let it lead you to think, O my miserable condition through sin—who can utter all the malignancy of sin! what an infinite mercy that I have not been left to perish in so great a ruin; but though I am fallen in Adam, there is a way of recovery in Christ. Has the subject been repentance? let it lead you to self-inquiry, whether you can discern in your own heart the marks of true re-

* Among the multitude of little works of the present day, in the catechistical form, it might be difficult and invidious to mention any in particular; the Church Catechism, broken into short Questions; the Exposition published by the Bristol Church of England Tract Society; the Rev. W. Marsh's Catechism, and the useful Catechisms of the Rev. Basil Wood, and his Abridgment of Gastrell in the catechistical form, with Dr. Watts's Catechisms and his Scripture History will be familiar to our reader.

pentance; let it show you how hard your heart is, that sorrows so little for your many sins, and how great the Saviour's grace that gives repentance! In this way practically apply to your own individual conduct the various truths delivered to you, that you may be really edified by what you hear.

Besides recollecting, meditating on, conversing about, and practically viewing the truths which you hear, *refer constantly to the word of God.* The Bereans, as we have noticed in the preceding chapter, searched in private, whether the doctrine of the Apostles accorded with the Scriptures: they did this *daily,* diligently studying and investigating the different testimonies of the word, just as a judge carefully goes through all the evidence that has been presented before him, omitting nothing that is material that he may give a right judgment. Every faithful minister will rejoice to find his people thus searching the Scriptures for themselves. It is a first principle of the Protestant religion. It is the very point to which it is most desirable that our hearers should be brought, that their faith may be in God, and not in man. The *daily* study of the Bereans seems to say to us, "Do not be content merely with hearing the Gospel from your minister on Sunday: let the holy Bible itself be your chief confidence, your every-day companion. Nor is it a light matter on which your judgment is to be formed. It concerns eternity and more imperatively demands attention than any other subject whatsoever, for thus faith cometh, and from faith, salvation." See the happy Bereans, now in eternal bliss. Partakers through faith of Christ's salvation, they were blessed in him; and could we now behold them, we should see them rejoicing before the throne of God, blessed through all eternity, having entered into the full enjoyment of that promise, "whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Is not that glory worth a little sacrifice and self-denial, worth a little giving up of our prejudices, and passions, and sinful indulgences; worth submitting our dark understandings to the clearly-revealed mind of God, and the gracious teachings of his Holy Spirit?

But while Christians have an undoubted right to try all that they hear by the divine standard, do not abuse this right, and make it foster pride; do not make your own opinion, instead of Scripture, the judge. Where hearers do this, a faithful sermon, full of scriptural truth, may be reproached by one as legal, by another as Antinomian, by another as Calvinistic, by another as Arminian, and by another as mere morality; while all the time, the plain truths of the Bible only were delivered. Be not thus partial judges of your ministers. There are those who enjoy religious advantages, which millions earnestly covet, who put away all from them, and, as if surfeited with the heavenly manna, despise and reject the bread of life. O then let us be serious and humble enquirers; and not presumptuous judges of what we hear!

But the most important work after all is, in retirement, and with all earnestness, to *pray* for the blessing of God. He, he only, giveth the increase. O let us honour his Spirit by looking for that aid, as the only efficient improver of all we hear, the only guide, sanctifier, and comforter of our souls. No regulations, however excellent, without the blessed Spirit's holy and heavenly grace, will do us any good. Satan does not fly from human words and resolutions. He is eager to take away the precious seed. Let us go to our closets then, let us kneel before God, let us earnestly, with uplifted hands, and all ardour of desire, spread the sermon which we have heard, and our own insufficiency to obey, before Him whose grace is sufficient. He will give grace to help in time of need. As the minister should go from his knees to the house of God, and return thither; so the people will find rich spiritual blessings from a similar course. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrance the things which we have heard. John xiv, 26. Let the substance of the sermon be turned into prayer and intercession, and we shall receive the life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit,

making it the power of God to our salvation.

Prayers after hearing.

I.

O Lord God, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, I give unto thee unfeigned thanks for the light of thy Gospel, and for the opportunity which I have now had of hearing thy holy word.

Pardon my dulness and inattention, my unbelief and carelessness; and notwithstanding my many defects, O do thou give me an abundant increase to the good seed which has been sown in my heart. Let thy Holy Spirit bring thy word to my remembrance, and make it sanctifying and fruitful to thy glory, and my eternal good. Let not my spiritual enemies prevail against me; but may I have grace from thee duly to improve my present advantages, and to become wise unto salvation.

II.

O thou, who to them that have no might increasest strength; thou, who art my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, full of compassion, and plenteous in mercy, thou knowest my great weakness, and how soon temptations and trials, and the cares of the world would hinder all real profit from thy word. I look up then to thee, I look even to thee alone, to cause that which I have heard to be an abiding blessing to my soul. May thy Holy Spirit write a law in my heart, and cause me to walk in thy statutes and judgments. O give me a spiritual discernment of the truth, and incline my heart to a practical obedience to it, so that I may not only be a hearer but a doer of the word. May I thus, by the fruits of a holy life, glorify thy great name, and have it made manifest to my own conscience, that thou hast from the beginning chosen me to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. All this, with every spiritual blessing, I ask in the worthy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

On Practical Obedience to the Word.

Divine truth was, in all its parts, designed to have a practical tendency. Hence where truly received, while it enlightens the understanding, it leads to the unreserved submission of the will, and the obedience of the heart. The grace of the Holy Spirit effects by the word corresponding tempers and practice to the truth revealed. 1 Pet. i, 22, 23. The threatenings awaken attention, and so influence that "the prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself." Prov. xxiii, 3. The promises of divine mercy in a free salvation, through a Redeemer, produce faith, humility and gratitude, love and devotion. The pure and holy law of God leads to conviction of sin, sense of danger, and earnest application for help. The glorious Gospel inspires with hope, and joy, and peace. The Christian graces and tempers become a test of character, and lead to self-examination and humiliation.

The Hebrews have a proverb, "Whosoever hears and learns the law, and does not act according to it, is like to a man that sows, and does not reap." Works of obedience are the very harvest for which the seed of the word is sown. The first design of hearing, is indeed to obtain knowledge; but the ultimate design is to be conformed to the divine will, and so prepared for the divine glory. This is thus expressed by Moses; "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the works of this law." Deut. xxxi, 12. Let us then cast away our most beloved sins.

Let us not merely, like Herod, "hear gladly, and do many things," and yet from love of one particular sin, ultimately reject the whole truth; (Mark vi.) or like Ahab, who (determining still to keep his purpose of going to Ramoth Gilead,) rejected the words of Micaiah, (1 Kings xxii,) and perished in the battle.

The truths of the Bible are not matters of speculation, or things of indifference; but, when cordially received, produce a striking change, and powerful effect. The Apostle speaks of this when he expresses his gratitude to God for the change wrought among the Romans,—"God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you;" or, as it might be rendered,—the model of doctrine into which ye were delivered. Just as that which is melted and poured into a mould, takes the form and disposition of the mould, so the dispositions, tempers, and life of the Christian are moulded and fashioned by divine truth—his conversation is such as becometh the Gospel.

St. James uses another figure, containing something of a similar sentiment, when he calls the Scriptures, "the ingrafted word, which is able to save your soul." This figure is very expressive.* The shoot, or slip, that is ingrafted, is not of the proper growth of the tree, but is taken from another tree. A good shoot is put on a bad stock, and so changes the course of the juice to the strengthening a new plant, sweetening the sap, which it receives from the stock, and making it a means of producing and bringing forth good fruit. Thus the word of Christ ingrafted on our bad nature, becomes a shoot from which the fruits of righteousness are produced. It is a vital principle productive of spiritual life. Just as the graft inserted in the stock becomes a new means of bearing quite a new fruit on the stock on which it is grafted, so the word of God, when received into the heart of the believer, produces there the tempers and dispositions which are inculcated in that word, and form its true character. Your natural vigour and energy, your judgment and affection, all thus receive a right and fruitful direction. The word is sometimes called a seed, (1 Pet. i, 23.) but the idea of a graft seems to convey an intimation of farther benefit. It is said that the seed of fruit trees when sown, will often degenerate, and produce such fruit as is not worth cultivating; but when grafts are taken from good trees, they will not deteriorate, or fall away; the leaves, the wood, the flowers and the fruit, are perfectly the same with those of the tree from which the graft is taken. O that it might please God, Christian reader, that his divine truth may be so grafted in us, that there may be a constant union between us and the word, and all the fruit peculiar to that word may appear in our life.

But it is, alas! too often found that the truths of God do not produce a practical obedience, and that men hear without being the better for what they hear. This subject calls for more full notice. St. James speaks of it at some length, and sums up his remarks in the direction,—"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your ownselves." James i, 22.

It is very important to hear; it is the first step towards salvation; and those who altogether disregard the word, are in the broad road that leads to destruction. But men may sit and hear the word frequently, and not object to it, and yet never be influenced by that word to change their life. They do not hear it for that purpose, but from various inferior motives, and thus hear without practical benefit. They come as *hearers only*.

It may be well to enlarge on this topic. Thus, some come from *custom*. They have been brought up in this good habit;

* Archbishop Usher says, "We may have a little motion by the word, yet there is a rock in our souls, a stone in our hearts, and though we may sometimes seem to receive it with some affection, and be made as it were sermon sick, yet it holds but a while, it betters us not: why, because it is not received as an ingrafted word. Therefore St. James says, "receive with meekness the ingrafted word. Let the word be ingrafted in thee; one sprig of it is able to make thee grow up to everlasting life. Be not content with hearing of it, but pray God it may be firmly rooted in your hearts; this will cause a softening."—See his twenty Sermons.

their friends look for their attendance; their parents perhaps expect it from them if young, or their master or mistress require it of them if servants; they would feel uneasy even, if they did not come: but still they may so come that nothing is farther from their mind than the intention of hearing to have their conduct guided, or that they are really interested in what the minister says. In such a case, attendance is like a mere mechanical act of the body, something that habit and custom have made easy, and even necessary; but, through the deadness and worldliness of their minds, it is unprofitable to any spiritual good.

Others, who are hearers only, come to listen, hoping *to hear something new* and extraordinary. They are desirous of entertainment, and of having something to talk about. They want an intellectual treat, and desire not, as the chief thing, edification, and spiritual good. Ezekiel gives a very striking picture of such; (Ezek. xxxiii, 30.) "The children of thy people are still talking of thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord." They went, but did not obey.

Others, who are hearers only, *mistake the means for the end.* If they were to be asked what it is to be religious, they would probably say—to hear sermons, attend prayers, receive the sacrament, and the like. No; a man may do all these things, and have no real religion at all. They are but means of promoting religion. Real religion is, to have a constant regard to the favour of God, our reconciled Father in Jesus Christ; and for his sake to abound in disinterested and self-denying acts of love, to those most needing our care; and to watch against, and keep ourselves from the temptations and corruptions of a world lying in wickedness. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James i, 27. There are those who hear, perhaps, above a hundred sermons every year, and are in the church devout and religious; but when they leave the place where they worship, they seem to leave all their religion, and are, among those with whom they associate, worldly, proud, and passionate. These are hearers only. It has been remarked, "the profession of most men, is a mere non-renunciation of the Gospel in words, while in their hearts and lives they deny the power of it every day."

Others hear *for the mind*, and not for the heart and life; they speculate, they debate, they reason, they object, they approve, they judge—but this is all. Mere knowledge of particular points of revealed truth, in an unsanctified heart, puffs a man up with pride, and keeps him at a distance from Christ and his salvation. It often happens that such "cannot endure the truth, but after their own lusts, heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and turn away their ears from the truth, and are turned unto fables." Tim. iv, 3, 4. On the contrary, there are those who hear merely for *the moving of the affections.* Do not rest in mere emotions, in pleasurable feelings, instead of being carried on to real regeneration, and devotion of the whole life to God.

Mr. Gisborne, in his Sermon on this subject, (vol. ii, of his Sermons) has described two other characters in so lively a way, that I subjoin his remarks upon them in his own words. "Many persons attend public worship merely from *a regard to character.* They see the neighbourhood flocking to church: therefore they go thither. They perceive that orderly and respectable persons make a point of regular attendance, and they are not unwilling to embrace the same method of being esteemed orderly and respectable. A man of this description has satisfied his wishes by showing himself in the Church. When he listens to the sermon, it is without earnestness, and with many a secret wish that it were at an end. He relapses into some worldly train of thought, until he is aroused from a vacant reverie, or from meditation on his business, or his pleasures, by hearing the joyful sound of the congregation rising to depart."

"Others *sit in judgment* upon a sermon. Swollen with spiritual pride, and deeming themselves complete masters of the most difficult points of doctrine, they scrutinize every sentence, which drops from the lips of the preacher; put each of his words to the rack; examine the soundness of his orthodoxy with inquisitorial suspicion; and if they are able to fasten on an expression not precisely consonant with the niceties of their own religious phraseology, or capable of being understood, in a sense somewhat at variance with their peculiar prepossessions, deny their instructor to be evangelical, pronounce him blind, and congratulate themselves on their own scriptural attainments and keen-eyed sagacity. Eager to censure and impatient to decide; the fruit which they reap from the return of the Sabbath is to be flattered in corruption and confirmed in ignorance."

The persons we have considered are, in the expressive language of St. James, *hearers only*. They are told of the wonderful love of God in Christ Jesus, but it never reaches, and warms, and renews the heart. They are exhorted to believe in Christ, but they never go beyond a mere notion of faith. Or a dead unprofitable assent to truth. They are required to repent of their sins, but they never grieve for them, and never forsake them. They are plainly told, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and yet they seek not holiness. They are informed of their insufficiency, but they pray not for the Holy Ghost. They are urged to strive to enter in at the strait gate, but after all they go in the broad road, they partake of the spirit of the world, and are never under the practical, holy, and humbling influence of divine truth. O Christian reader, may divine grace teach us to remember, that it is not enough to say to Christ, "Thou hast taught in our streets," (Luke xiii, 26.) and "have we not prophesied in thy name?" Matt. vii, 22. If men still remain unaffected and unchanged by the truth, if they still be workers of iniquity, they will perish in their iniquity.

The Apostle shows how it is that the Gospel has no effect on such; "If any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway he forgetteth what manner of man he was." Just as the mirror shows us what we are in our outward appearance, and discovers to us any spots, or any thing unbecoming which we could not otherwise discern, so divine truth discovers to us the exact state of our hearts, and all that sinfulness and corruption which there is within us. A person may look at himself in a glass, and not remove the defects which are thus discovered to him; but putting the glass away, entirely forget them: and so it is with such as are mere hearers. When the sermon is done, the mirror is put away by them. They have had a transient glimpse of their true state; but they have altered nothing that was wrong, they had no intention of rectifying any thing. They mind very little at the time, and reflect less afterwards; and continue, notwithstanding all the sermons which they hear, just the same from year to year.

It is true that the natural face of the heart, if we may use the expression, is exceedingly unclean and deformed: therefore we hate the sight of it, and we love to put it far from us. The forgetful hearer, while the truth is set before him, has often short-lived convictions of his sinfulness, is displeased with himself, and thinks of altering and changing; but no sooner is this faithful mirror taken away, than all his views of his sinfulness are forgotten, he soon looses sight of himself, and remains unchanged, and unconverted.

There is a great self-deception in all this. Such a man's attention to religious duties makes him fancy himself religious, and he thus blinds his own eyes to his true state; he willingly shuts out the light, and perishes in the mid-day blaze of Gospel privileges. Satan could never ensure his destruction, did he not willingly concur with Satan by wilful blindness. Such persons do not, as they often imagine they do, much mislead others. A man who is living in sinful tempers and practices, who is neglecting his relative duties, and is worldly and earthly minded, does not impose on the discerning. They see his profession to be a mere

cloke, and readily detect his hypocrisy; but he awfully *deceiveth his own heart.*

For instance, he hears the doctrine of salvation by grace through Christ, and disregarding the plain and declared truth, that it is a salvation from sin as well as from guilt, he thinks only of the comfort of free pardon, concludes that he is safe, because he admits a single truth, and passes by all that holiness which is ever connected with real salvation.

He hears the doctrine of faith only as the means of justification, and either wholly disregards the fruit of faith and the plain expressions of St. James, "Even so faith without works is dead being alone," or satisfies himself with very slight, superficial, and unscriptural evidences of salvation.

He hears the necessity of good works, and rests in his own scanty obedience; in an outward morality, without a new heart. He hears of the work of the Spirit, and thinks that he has received that Spirit, because he has had some warm emotions and feelings on religion, entirely disregarding the great proof of having received the Spirit in the steady course of a holy life. Others deceive themselves because religious friends think well of them, and speak kindly to them, forgetting that no human judgment will clear us before God—*he that judgeth us is the Lord.*

O how fatal is this delusion! Such a man is ready to think his is especially the wise and prudent course; he imagines that there is no plan of reconciling a worldly life with the hope of future happiness, so cheap and convenient as hearing and perhaps assenting to the Gospel. When a man has persuaded himself that such an unprofitable hearing will save him, and goes on so, and ends so, how awful is the idea, that the very things on which he founded his hopes will be his ruin; the very hearing in which he trusted, and boasted, will only rise up in judgment against him to aggravate his sins, and increase his condemnation and misery. Not that it is better to neglect the word. "If men that hear the word of God and do it not, are such foolish builders, what can they be who will not so much as hear! And if the ground where the seed perish is condemned, the ground that never receives the seed at all, will not escape a tremendous condemnation." But still, when men hear and neglect what they hear, "how it opens the mouths of gainsayers and emboldens them to their imputations on preaching; they have some colour to cry out, 'There are none worse, more proud, wanton, contentious, covetous, oppressing, fraudulent, than the greatest hearers.' When you walk not according to the rules which you are taught, you make preaching and professing to be reputed the nursery of ungodliness and the covert for all villainy. Let it not be said, 'Such hear sermons every week, but how do they live!'"

Such are some of the various methods in which persons fail of that practical obedience which the word of God tends to produce, and which is of such immense moment. How then may we avoid these evils? and how may we obtain that full and practical good which the word is intended to effect?

The Apostle James, whose writings are remarkably practical, again assists us here. He says, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James i, 25. Christian truth is a law of *liberty:* it shows us the way of deliverance from the bondage of sin, and of access to spiritual freedom. It finds us in worse than Egyptian bondage, guilty, enslaved, condemned and ruined. It proclaims to us, through the merit of Christ and the grace of his Spirit, pardon for our sins, and freedom from slavery. It is *perfect*, as it reaches every case, embraces every circumstance, and nothing human can, or need be added to it, to render it more effectual. The blood of Christ alone cleanses from all sin, the righteousness of Christ alone justifies, the word of Christ is the only rule of life, the Spirit of Christ alone sanctifies. It is perfect, as it shows us man's only and man's highest bliss, and that all interested in its saving blessings shall be kept by the power of God to the end, and shall enjoy after death an eternal felicity. It is a *law*, as it is a constitution of divine grace that will never be altered, the only

authorised way that must be received and embraced, at the hazard, if we neglect it, of eternal ruin.

Now the way to practical obedience is to *look into this law and continue therein*, just as a person anxious to correct any deformity in his appearance, bends to the glass, and looks narrowly, and carefully, and removes what was unsightly, and adjusts what was disordered; so the obedient Christian carefully listens to the word, and searches the Scriptures to alter whatever may be wrong, and to regulate his whole life. It discovers to him, it is true, a very humbling picture of his own heart, it lays him low in the dust, it calls him to a pure and holy life, and these things are not naturally pleasant to us, but by the grace of God he *continues therein*. It is not a transient glimpse, but he comes again and again, inspects himself by the mirror, and learns more and more of his true character, and to conform himself to that which is his real excellence. See how a female, vain of her person and dress, makes use of the mirror again and again. O were we as solicitous to have our souls adorned with righteousness and holiness, and, abiding in Christ and receiving his Spirit, looked thus patiently and earnestly, again and again, into the divine mirror, our defects would be removed, and we should be adorned with the infinitely more valuable *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, and every other Christian grace.

Such a man is *not a forgetful hearer*. Here is a special danger intimated. We are very apt to forget. It is quite natural to us, as soon as the word ceases to sound in our ears, to lose its impressions on our hearts.

Therefore Moses says, *Take heed to thyself, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life.* Deut. iv, 9. He who by the grace of his Holy Spirit remembers what has been said, (John xiv, 26.) becomes acquainted with his true state, is deeply humbled under the sense of his sins, repents, believes, and obeys; gladly embraces the doctrines of salvation, and then makes steady advances in all the self-denying and arduous duties of the Christian life. He is not a forgetful hearer, but *a doer of the work*.

This *doing of the work*, or, in other words, practical obedience, is the main promise of the new covenant, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their heart." Heb. viii, 10. It is the aim of the Christian that his conduct should be a living and daily exhibition of the divine law. President Edwards, remarked it as his experience in a happy state of mind, "I do certainly know that I love holiness such as the Gospel prescribes. It appeared to me ravishingly lovely; as the highest beauty and amiableness; far purer than any thing here upon earth, and that every thing else was like mire and defilement in comparison of it;—it brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, and peacefulness to the soul. There was no part of creature holiness that I had so great a sense of its loveliness, as humility, and brokenness of heart, and poverty of spirit, and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for." Here we see the desire of the soul of the advanced Christian. As he grows in the knowledge of divine truth, every grace advances. He becomes more simply dependent on Christ, more tender in his conscience, and more grateful to his Redeemer. He is more humble before God, and more compassionate, forgiving, and loving to his fellow creatures. The *doer of the work* will be specially attentive in the discharge of all those relative duties, the fulfillment of which, eminently adorn the doctrine of Christ. He seeks, in short, that the law should be written on the fleshy tables of the heart, that he should be the "living epistle of Christ, known and read of all."

Jesus Christ is the perfect model and pattern of this practical obedience; a pattern fully set before us in his word. His people *hear* his *voice* and *follow* him: these ever go together: it is a vain thing to think of following Christ unless we hear his voice: and it is equally vain to pretend to hear his voice, if we are not seeking to tread in his steps.

The path which our Saviour trod was that of righteousness and ready obedience to the whole will of God. He justly said, "my meat is to do the will of him that

sent me, and to finish his work." John vi, 34. It was a pure and heavenly course, bringing upon him the displeasure of the world; "me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." John vii, 7. It was the path of humility, holiness, self-denial, and often of sacrifice and suffering. This then is the way in which the Christian must walk. If it be the way of affliction, we may well take it patiently, remembering that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us, an example that we should follow his steps." 1 Pet. ii, 21. It may be inconsistent with our obtaining the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life, though all that is really needful for us, is promised to us; Matt. vi, 33. yet here is an unspeakable source of comfort, it is the way that all the holy prophets, apostles, and martyrs, have gone before us; it leads us to God, our Heavenly Father, our beloved Saviour, our constant Comforter; it leads us to abiding rest and bliss. O that the promise may be fulfilled in each reader —"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord."

Christian reader! then let us gaze upon the Saviour, and narrowly inspect his character, and listen, to his words, if we would attain a practical obedience. View him, as the painter does an original picture, and, as he wishes to copy all the beauties, and to transfer to his own canvass all the lovely tints, and glowing colours, and matchless form and graces that distinguish the master painting, so let us endeavour to transfer to our heart, our conversation, and our life, all the lineaments of beauty which shine forth in him, that blessed Master, who is altogether lovely: His compassion, his patience and meekness, his unbounded charity, his unwearied love, his faith, his devotion, his boldness in reproving sin, and his zeal for his father's glory.

Nor let the excellence of the model lead us to despair. Much may be attained, for we have a mighty helper. It is the office of the Holy Ghost, through the ministry of the word, to make men *the Epistles of Christ:* these Epistles are "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Cor. iii, 3. That sweet and gracious Advocate and Comforter comes with the word, and inclines and assists, strengthens and consoles "those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And then, how abundant is *the blessedness of practical obedience!* Doing the will of God is, in the mind of our Saviour, true blessedness. We may learn this from the instructive turn that he gave to the remark on his discourses which the woman offered, who said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked." He directed those around to practical obedience as true happiness—"Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Luke, xi, 28. The blessing of good children is perhaps the greatest temporal good; but our Lord shows that it is far inferior to the spiritual good of piety and holiness. "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Matt. xii, 48-56. Hear again, too, the Apostle James—*This man* (the practical hearer) *shall be blessed in his deed*, not merely *for* it, but *in* it. The very acts of obedience bring a blessing—"in keeping his commandments there is great reward." There is unspeakable peace, tranquillity, and comfort of mind in obedience: the testimony of a good conscience brings infinitely greater joy into the heart, than all worldly things can do: no act of self-denial, holy love, penitence, and obedience is without its accompanying blessing of inward joy, and peace with God. The word of God is thus eminently glorified. When those who attend the word, are the best masters and mistresses, husbands or wives, children or servants; gentle, diligent, meek, obedient, humble, O how it adorns the Gospel. The Apostle presses this on wives, "To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." Let your temper and conversation show the good you get by hearing sermons. And

then look hereafter. Our Lord declares to those duly attending to his words—"I know them, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." It is the obedient Christian that will hear those joyful words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" All those who have done the will of God on earth, shall enter his heavenly kingdom, and their works be accepted through that Saviour, by whose grace they were performed. The more closely his grace enables us to conform to his will here, the more abundantly shall we be blessed by him and with him forever. Grace is the seed of glory.

CHAPTER X.

Answers to Objections that may be offered against Practical Obedience.

The subject of the last chapter is very important, and manifestly a main end of all preaching and hearing; yet the obedience there enforced is so opposed to the natural heart, that men ever raise many objections to it. Let us directly consider some of those objections.

There are few arguments against a religious life more plausible than this—If I attend, as the Bible requires, to my religious duties, *my worldly interests will suffer*—I shall displease the friends who are able and willing to assist me—or I shall offend those on whom I am dependent—or I shall lose opportunities of advancing myself in life.

This objection might be met by saying, You will not ordinarily in the result find this to be the fact. Have faith in God, and act a Christian part, whatever apparent loss it may bring; and you will find that "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," you will find our Saviour's words fulfilled—"He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

But the whole force of this objection has been met by our Lord on the very ground of the worldly man, on his own surmise, that he shall suffer all that he fears in this world. In these memorable words, our Lord fully answers one of the most plausible arguments that the world presents against religious duties, "What is a man profitted if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul! or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul."

Let a man have every possible earthly advantage, and no abatement of pain or loss, sickness or uncertainty; let him have all earthly wisdom, all strength, beauty, and riches; let him have universal dominion and universal admiration; let him have all these, with uninterrupted health and prosperity, and that for lengthened days, and let all these be *gained* by his own skill, wisdom, and industry. No man ever had this; but allow the supposition, and give every advantage that the worldly heart can desire, without any abatement on account of the ordinary disappointments, and daily sorrows, trials and difficulties, to which the most favored of men are liable and exposed, and which they have endured—allow only, what must be allowed, that it is a temporal possession, that it is but for a limited season; and to an immortal spirit, as man is, all the glory is at once faded. In the eye of a sound judgment, it is all unsatisfying: it is but *vanity and vexation of spirit.*

But this is not all the poverty and emptiness of such a choice. *The friendship of the world is enmity with God.* There is a tremendous loss connected with the gain of the world by the neglect of religion, even the loss of the soul. If it was merely a temporal life that was to be lost—suppose, for instance, a man were to have the best advantages of this world for a single hour, on the understood condition, that at the end of that hour he was to be capitally executed; what man in his senses would take the temporary good with such a condition? Observe the sailor in the tempest; he will cast over the cargo, he will cut down the masts, he will throw away even the provisions, he will spare nothing to escape death, and to save his temporal life for a few short surviving years, it may be, full of trial and sorrow: how much more then may the Christian part with every thing to escape the loss of the soul, and to secure

eternal life, through countless ages of never ending joy and happiness!

When we fear our worldly interests will suffer, let us realize the thought of the soul's immortality. It not only lives in the body, but when the body sinks into the dust, the soul lives, thinks, and feels; is capable of sorrows and joys; yes, of eternal sorrows, or eternal joys. Think then what it is to lose the soul—to be forever miserable—forever in darkness and despair, in pain and anguish, after this temporal life is ended! No other evil can be imagined so tremendous, so deplorable. To lose the soul, is to lose, for ever lose, the favor of God, the glory of heaven, the presence of Christ, the company of holy and happy angels, and the blessed spirits above—it is to lose fullness of joy, and all those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. To lose the soul, is to be condemned to associate for ever with accursed spirits, wicked men, and apostate angels—for ever to remain an enemy to God and his servants—and in hopeless rebellion against him, "to be punished with everlasting destruction—to go away into everlasting punishment, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Consider that awful description, "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of holy angels, and in presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night."

In the fear of such a danger, where is the objection which we have noticed? The very ground of that objection, that your interests will suffer, is the very reason why you should attend to the Gospel; your very fear that you shall displease friends who may help you, should, on every principle of sound reason, lead you to repent and turn to God, that you may secure the favor of the most wise, kind, and powerful of all friends; the very loss of temporal good which you dread, should only lead you to give all diligence to escape eternal loss, and to obtain eternal life. By the terrors of the Lord, which shall all be realized to the wicked, we persuade; by the mercies of God, which are now to be obtained, we beseech you, lose not your own souls, destroy not your own eternal happiness.

We have reasoned, hitherto, on the idea that you would gain the whole world by neglecting religion; but you never will, you never can, gain the whole or the greatest part of it; nay, do not many disregard the Gospel for the most trivial gain, or the most worthless indulgence? O, when it comes at the last to be seen for what it was that men parted with their souls, how weak and absurd will the conduct of the wicked be found to have been! One was afraid of hurting the feelings of his companion; another loved his present ease; and another wished to add a few pounds to his property. One delighted to devote his life to literature; and another desired to gain the favour of a fellow creature of a day, though he offended the immortal Creator of all. One, for an oath that gave him no worldly profit; another, for a lie that brought him no real advantage; another, for sabbath breaking which gave him even no present happiness, parted with an eternal inheritance, everlasting life, the crown of glory, and the bliss of heaven, and bought the condemnation of God, the misery of never-ending despair, and the torments of hell. O let the sinner talk no more of his worldly interests suffering by religion. Every interest for time and eternity suffers by irreligion; and it only calls for faith in God's word to make us utterly ashamed of all such objections.

Another objection commonly made against a practical obedience to the word is this—*I cannot attend to it at the present time.* Just now, I am very busy, I have many other things to think of, and it would be so unseasonable, that I cannot now think of religion: a time will come when I may have more leisure. The answer to all the solemn truths heard is, like that of Felix to Paul, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But you forget that the present is the only season you really have—*now is the accepted time.* Can you insure a future time? you cannot! Can you be certain

that if you neglect your eternal interests now, God will hereafter give you his grace? Oh, no! you forget that if the soul be lost, it is an irremediable loss; there is no future ransom. By nature you will never have any other feeling than your present feeling of procrastination and delay; and if you trifle with God's present message of mercy, under such a pretext, you make his very mercy, the reason for insulting him the more. Will it not be just then, if he never sends again to you, or never again gives you the disposition to close with gracious invitations? What if the Gospel should never more be sounded in your ears! O if you should never again be inclined to turn to God, but given up to a worldly heart! Look at the state of mind of one awakened to a true sense of his condition in a dying hour! What would he not give for your present season of repentance and attention to eternal interests! Whatever be your occupations, he would think them all of inexpressible little importance, compared with the salvation of his soul. How gladly would he part with all those riches, and pleasures, and honors, for the sake of which he neglected his soul, rather than hazard his everlasting welfare! Or, supposing a man to be so stupified, or hardened through sin, as to have no such views, will he be equally indifferent in the day of judgment, or when enduring the wrath of God in endless ruin? You cannot put off that day; you cannot defer that ruin! Almighty power girds you in; there is no escaping the reach of his omnipotent arm! O think how the recollection of your present indecision, or rather, of your real rejection of the truth, will aggravate the irretrievable wo which you endure to the keenest degree of anguish. Think, patiently and seriously consider, that the loss of the soul is utterly irreparable, and can only be secured in the present moment, while God gives you the season of salvation, and surely you will be roused and cease to trifle.

But it is again objected, I shall be *counted foolish, and incur some odious name.* Allow this in its fullest extent; but will you be really foolish to escape merely the *imputation* of folly? "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding. Job xxviii, 28. The world is ready indeed to think that they mainly are guilty of folly who are in earnest in religion. But one would think, when the case was plainly stated, that no one could hesitate in admitting the extreme folly of neglecting our eternal happiness. Men of the world can at once tell the difference in property between a hundred pence to be received and spent in some wasteful pleasure to-day, in the place of an inheritance worth thousands a year, certainly to be received and enjoyed on the morrow, and would count him mad who would grasp at the present pence and part with all his title to the inheritance, which he was the next day to enjoy for a perpetuity. But this folly is incomparably less than that of every worldly man. O that such men were wise, to calculate the difference between the sixty or seventy years of this uncertain and transitory life, and the more than millions, or hundreds of millions of years, that will certainly and abidingly succeed! How great is the folly of sinful man! At death there is nothing that he will not give for his salvation; while during his whole life he hardly ever seriously thinks of it. He will do nothing, when he might gain every thing; he wishes to do all, when it is too late to do any thing. What an illusion is here! What an infatuation! Is not this genuine folly? O be not afraid of the reproach then of man. All the servants of God now in glory have endured it. Moses "counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Be assured that there is real happiness in being reviled for his name's sake; "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." 1 Pet. iv, 14. It is a cheering token of our interest in him, and in his eternal reward!*

* It has ever been the custom of those who are too prejudiced, or too ignorant, or too indolent to enter into the real merits of an opinion, to give the person holding it some odious name, and so condemn it without the difficulty of confutation. In this way the Heathen endeavoured to put down Christianity at first; and the remarks of Justin Martyr, in his Apology written in the second century, are very applicable to

Others object, *I hate hypocrisy; many that profess religion are hypocrites.* You do right to hate hypocrisy; our Lord pronounces a wo upon all hypocrites. But what if, in your present state, you yourself are a hypocrite? you profess to be a Christian, and yet live to the world; that is hypocrisy. You profess to think real religion of value, and yet for fear of hypocrisy, disguise and conceal your attachment to it; that is real hypocrisy. And what is the root of this objection—unmortified pride. You are afraid of the charge of hypocrisy being brought against you, and that you should sink in the estimation of your friends and companions. But, O, for a little moment look higher than man: God's eye is upon you. He sees through all your littleness. He detects all your sophistry. O bring no more vain excuses. Seek his favour. The hypocrisy of others only renders it more needful and important that you who profess the Gospel should be sincere and upright before God and man.

Somewhat like this, is another objection—*The multitude are likely to be right: men in general think and live differently.* Why then did our Lord say, "Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat;" and, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it?" Why did his Apostles declare, "Love not the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Let these plain declarations speak for themselves. Remember the positive precept, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.* Dare to be singular for God, and he will carry you through all difficulties, to your comfort and honour here, and to your eternal reward hereafter. It has been well observed, "The world gathers impunity from the number of transgressors; the Bible shows it to be the very reason for quick-approaching and tremendous judgment. If in Sodom there had been ten, if in Jerusalem there had been one righteous, (Jer. v, 1,) they would have been spared. The Lord magnifies his power in the destruction of mighty and numerous enemies." 1 Sam. ii, 10. O recollect, that if the whole world condemn you, this will not be a reason why you should be condemned of God; if the whole world approve you, it does not make you stand one whit better in his sight who is your final and supreme Judge. "It is a very small matter to be judged of man's judgment; he that judgeth us is the Lord."

But while men of the world bring their objections against a religious course, let me bring one against continuing in a worldly course, contrary to the checks of conscience. *What if your heart should thereby become hardened*, and repentance become impracticable!

The Scriptures often solemnly caution us not to harden our hearts against the reception of the truth. Hardness of heart is a figurative expression, signifying an unfitness to receive an impression, just as wax when hard will not receive the impression of the seal. It is a voluntary perverseness of mind in not tak-

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names now given to Christians in the nineteenth.

"As for our name, which is tantamount to a crime against a Christian, if we are tried upon that article, we must certainly be acquitted as very good men: but as we should deem it unreasonable when convicted of real crimes to plead a bare name only in arrest; so, on the other side, if both with respect to our name and the nature of our polity, we are found altogether innocent, it is at your door to take care, lest by unjustly punishing a people convicted of no evil, you yourselves deservedly smart for such injustice. Praise and punishment, then, cannot with reason be charged on a mere name, unless there be actions good or bad to justify the charge. But it is very notorious that when any of your own religion are brought to trial, you never punish them before you convict them; but when a Christian is indicted, you snatch at the shadow of his name for a substantial crime; whereas would you give yourselves leave to consider that name, you would find it more becoming to animadvert upon the accusers than the accused; for we are indicted by the name of Christians. Again, if any of the accused retract the name of Christian, you take him presently at his word, and acquit him as having nothing more criminal to charge against him; but he who has the courage to stick to the profession of his name, is certain to suffer for so doing; when the life of the professor and the non-professor both ought to be the subject of your enquiry, that the merits of both might be manifested by their actions."

ing notice of the will of God, nor applying the affections to fulfill it. This perverseness is natural to us all; but it increases and becomes an habitual hardness, through the rejection of the only remedy for changing and softening the heart.* None are so hardened in sin as those that are wicked under a faithful ministry. Isa. vi, 9, 10. Every fresh sin adds another link to the chain that ties and binds our souls, and increases, day by day, the difficulty of repentance.

Bear then in mind the truth, that no sermon is heard in vain; it either hardens or softens; it is either a "savour of death unto death, or a savour of life unto life." Perhaps nothing hardens more than a mere external attendance on ordinances. To hear threatenings against sin, time after time, and yet continue those sins; and to hear, again and again, of the love of Christ, and yet remain unmoved by that love, sears the conscience and deadens the soul.

The course of sin, and its consequences, are well described by Zechariah; (ch. vii, 11—13.) "They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their heart as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets; therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts; therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." Indeed, how can they who harden their hearts against God ever prosper? Job ix, 4. God is their enemy, and who can be their friend? The case of Pharaoh is left on record for our instruction. He refused, time after time, to hear the voice of God by Moses; he gradually became more and more hardened, till at last God gave him up to his hardness; "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh," and he miserably perished. There was here a judicial hardness of heart inflicted upon him, in just punishment for his repeated rejection of God's word. It is a fearful thing, Christian reader, to fall into the hands of the living God, and to be given up by him to a hardened heart, and a reprobate mind. If you hear not to-day, your heart will to-morrow be more hard and indisposed to hear. Look at the state of the Jews. For above seventeen hundred years they have been scattered and dispersed, a proverb and a bye-word among all nations, and that for this very sin, refusing to hear the word of God. Look at the dreadful regions of eternal woe, and one mark of its miserable inhabitants is, they hardened their hearts against the voice of God speaking to them through the works of creation and providence, or in the word of his grace.

Some, after long rejection of the Gospel, have, at the close of life, felt the excellence of religion, and the value of repentance, and have found, too late, that they could not repent. We have a record of one who in the agony of his last days said,—"Were Christ to assist me, I should repent; but he has justly withdrawn his influences from me. I have so often crucified him afresh, and put him to open shame; and so often grieved his Holy Spirit, that God has left me to a spirit of impenitence, and given me the certain earnest of a fearful inheritance in another life." He left this world with the agonizing expression,—"O the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation!"

If you would avoid such a woe, con-

* There are some things that appear like this sin, which do not really indicate it; and this calls for more express notice, lest humble and contrite Christians should be needlessly distressed. Some are anxious because they have not had grievous terrors and alarms on account of their sins; others because they cannot weep at the recollection of their guilt; and others because they feel dull and heavy in religious exercises. But these are no certain marks of hardness of heart. They may spring from totally different causes, such as constitution, a peculiar course of God's providential dealings, &c. Many previous sins make way for the great sin of finally rejecting God's word with a hardened heart. Men willingly admit prejudices against the truth, they come under the influence of false principles, and in love with their sins, they "choose darkness rather than light," yield to their corruptions, and cleave to earthly and sensual objects. Such men are sinfully careless, and indifferent about spiritual things; wilfully and perseveringly cast off convictions of duty, and obstinately cling to carnal things in preference to the things of God.

tinue not a worldly course against the check of your own convictions; cultivate a tender conscience. Do not act against the sober judgment of your mind. Do not stifle your convictions, by plunging into carnal pleasures, and sensual indulgences. Do not listen to infidel or irreligious principles. Grieve not the Spirit of God. Quench not his holy and blessed influence on your mind. Meditate on what you hear. Compare it with the word of God in private. Pray over it, and examine yourselves by it. Come to the house of God, continue there, and return from it in the spirit of prayer. Above all, seek constantly the gracious gift of the Holy Ghost. He softens the hardest heart. He produces convictions of sin. He shall remove all your doubts. He will convince you of the weakness and sinfulness of all worldly objections. He shall enlighten the eyes of your understanding, to "know what is the hope of his calling and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." He sanctifies by the truth; and in the very hearing attracts, wins, and purifies your soul. O look for his teaching, and live under his influence, and you will find the hearing of the word powerful and efficacious to your soul's eternal good: and then, so far from objecting to practical obedience, you will say with David, "O how I love thy law!" or, with a greater than David, "I delight to do thy will, O my God."

But, O blessed Spirit, in vain do we address the understanding and the heart, and make it palpably plain that the service of God is the only path of wisdom: thy grace is alone sufficient to make men walk in that path: unless thou thyself teach the heart, we prevail nothing: descend thou upon the writer, and upon the reader: and then indeed we shall be wise unto salvation!

CHAPTER XI.

Observations on the Parable of the Sower.

This parable so directly regards the subject of this Treatise, and is so full of the most important instruction, that it may be desirable to discuss it, distinctly and particularly. We will first give the account we have in the three Gospels of this parable, Matt. xiii, Mark iv, and Luke viii, in the way of harmony.*

"Hearken! behold, there went out a sower to sow his seed. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it: and some fell on stony ground, upon a a rock, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprung up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and as soon as it was sprung up, because it had no root, and lacked moisture, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up with it, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And others fell on good ground, and did yield fruit, that sprang and increased, and brought forth; some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

"And, when he had said these things, he cried, and said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Hear ye therefore, the parable of the sower. The seed which the sower soweth is the word of God. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then Satan, the wicked one, cometh immediately, and taketh away the word which was sown in his heart, lest they should believe and be saved. This is he which receiveth seed by the way side. And these are they likewise which receiveth the seed on stony ground, on the rock: who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it, with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so believe, and endure but for a time, and afterwards, in time of temptation, when affliction, or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended, and fall away. And these are they which received seed among thorns: such as hear the word, and when they have heard, go

* The author refers the reader to Muir and Stennett on this parable. He has taken several thoughts from those writers.

forth, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and pleasures of this life, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful; yea, they are choked, and bring no fruit to perfection. And these are they which received the seed into good ground, such as hear the word, and understand, and receive, and keep it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience, some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some an hundred."

Our Lord's explanation of this parable makes its general design obvious to all. By the sower, is intended the ministers of his word; by the seed, his word; and by the ground, the heart of man. The reader will observe the seed was all sown at the same time, by the same person, and was all of equal goodness. The whole difference was in the state of the ground. We will then consider separately the particulars noticed with reference to the different kinds of ground, on which the seed was sown.

Sect. I.—*The Way-side.*

This description points out to us the heart of the careless hearer. Seed sown by the way-side is scattered on ground that is grown hard, by being frequently trodden upon, and so is quite unfit to receive it; and it is soon either destroyed by the feet of passengers, or devoured by the birds of the air.

What a picture is this of the state of a careless hearer! Such a person hears the word as others do. He is not among those who despise and neglect it altogether. He does not fly from sermons, but listens to them; and yet it is only occasionally that he hears. The seed is sown as it were accidentally: from some worldly motive or other, he has been led to hear, but he is not at all prepared to receive what is spoken in a right spirit. His mind has never been broken up, and cultivated by penitence and prayer, by thoughtfulness and reflection. While he hears, it is in a heedless and desultory manner; little regarding what is said, and in no way anxious to retain, remember, and improve it. In St. Matthew it is said, such a one "heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not." Though he hears, he takes no pains truly to comprehend what is said, and to be edified by it. It makes no abiding impression. What is scattered is trodden down; some fresh event, or other, puts it out of his thoughts; divine instruction is treated by such persons with indifference, if not with a degree of contempt. Their minds are occupied with something else; and instead of reflecting on what they hear, they are thinking of "something they have seen or done, or are meditating on some new plans, some fresh pursuit, some scheme of business, or pleasure, and thus scarcely give the word any attention, or attend only to the manner of its delivery." No wonder, then, that such obtain no solid views of divine truth, and are unimpressed, and not benefitted even by a revelation from God himself.

But the consequences of hearing in this way are most ruinous! "the devil cometh, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." When worldly men ridicule the notion of an apostate malignant spirit, mighty to tempt and injure the soul, they directly oppose the word of God. The Bible clearly reveals this truth, and expressly asserts it. Our Lord spoke the words to which we have just referred, in the *explanation* of the parable, and therefore without a figure. Our great enemy can hardly desire a greater advantage over us, than that he should succeed in leading us to disbelieve his existence. The most certain mode of conquest is to persuade my enemy to undervalue my strength, and to ridicule my ability to injure him. A knowledge of the existence and power, the skill and resources of the enemy will make us watchful against him. This subtle, and wicked, and powerful spirit has access to our hearts; and though he cannot injure us without God's permission, and cannot force us to sin; yet is he ever watchful to seize advantages against us, and to prevent the due effect of the word. Careless hearers abundantly give him such advantages. Little do they think, while they are sitting unconcerned about the solemn truths of the Gospel, that Satan rejoices in their indifference, and im-

proves it to the utmost. That great adversary is ready to inject into our minds innumerable vain and foolish thoughts, in order to keep us from attending to the one thing needful. He diverts our mind from the word when preached, or prevents our recollecting it afterwards. Or perhaps he has preoccupied your mind with prejudices, and hardened it against the word, so that you are not disposed to listen to what is said, or compare it with the word of God. Your eye, or ear, or imagination is caught with some object, that "insensibly carries you out into a train of thought different from and opposite to the things which are spoken, and so you pursue and follow out in your mind schemes and employments of another character."

Our Lord notices that the hateful design of Satan is to prevent our salvation —lest they should believe and be saved." Faith cometh by heariug, and salvation being inseparably connected with faith, if you reject the word of God, you remain in your natural unbelief and are in danger of perishing forever. O dreadful malice of Satan! O inexpressible folly of man! he throws himself into the temptations and snares of his chief foe, and willingly casts away his only remedy.

But it may be useful to expose more fully the devices of this enemy. If you heard attentively, and were mindful of the solemn truths delivered to you; if you thought of them duly, and weighed them deliberately; this is the ordinary course in which God imparts the gift of faith to man. Your doubts would be removed, your prejudices dispelled, and your judgment convinced. Your hearts would receive the impressions of the good Spirit, and be led to embrace the great salvation provided in the Gospel. You would learn your sinfulness, and your danger, and would be brought to rely simply on the Lord Christ for salvation, and so be filled with joy and with peace in believing here, and your precious and immortal soul would be eternally saved. This salvation is a blessing above all price, including pardon, righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life. It is a translation from sin to holiness, from misery to happiness, from the sentence of a justly merited and eternal vengeance, to the free title and full hope of everlasting felicity.

Now the cruel and envious design of Satan is to rob our souls of all this happiness. He who was a murderer from the beginning, would shut up our souls in unbelief, that we may perish in eternal ruin, that we may be for ever tormented with him in the dread abode of eternal woe. Guard then against his devices. Remember, that the Gospel is the last, and the only remedy of ruined man. If you reject it, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Satan, filled as he is with malevolence, doubtless rejoices in your anticipated misery. O gratify not that malignant fiend! O grieve not the good Spirit! O be not accessory to your own perdition! Shut not your own eyes, close not your own ears, to the way of salvation, and Satan cannot prevail against you. Be careless no longer. Be attentive to hear. Be diligent to pray. Meditate on what you hear, and you shall be saved: for the form of expression—lest they should believe, shows that while hearing there is a hope that you may be saved. Satan would not be so active if he saw no danger of losing his prey. Cry then mightily for help, and though your heart be as the way-side, it shall be ploughed up, and prepared for the good seed. You shall believe and be saved.

Sect. II.—*The Stony Ground.*

This description points out to us the heart of the temporary hearer. He goes farther than the careless hearer, but still stops short of salvation. The effect of the word on him indeed at first is wonderful. The seed is hardly sown before it springs up, and appears flourishing, and prosperous; but nothing really valuable is produced.

The figure is very expressive; the ground is hard and stony, covered with a slight soil, and having no depth of earth. Such is the corrupt and hardened heart of man by nature—such is his natural perverseness and obstinacy. He has what Ezekiel calls "the heart of

stone," or what St. Paul calls "the carnal mind which is enmity against God. There is some earth in which the seed may be sown, but there is no depth of it. This seems to point out those warm natural feelings which form a temper that we often see not unfavourable to the first reception of new and striking truths and doctrines. There is a warmth of heart and feeling which gives many advantages for a ready attention to the truth, but, alas! there is no stability. You see, sometimes, a lively imagination, but no judgment to correct it. There is often a deep sensibility, so that many tears flow at a moving statement, and yet there is nothing permanent. Such a one *receives* the word. He does not carelessly disregard and neglect it, but he gladly welcomes it. Indeed, in St. Luke it is said he for a while believes. There is an instantaneous assent of the mind to the truth. He counts not the cost and difficulty; but at once entertains a favourable opinion of it, and professes it before others; and this immediately. There is a certain eagerness and earnestness about such a mind that allows not of patient waiting and reflection. "Forthwith they spring up." It is not the most speedy appearance of religion that is always the most genuine. He does not compare the doctrines which he hears with the word of God, to take them upon a divine testimony, or to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good;" but he takes his sentiments from human authority, and is mainly influenced by the person he hears, and the manner, and address of the preacher. His feelings are soon wrought upon, and he manifests a flaming zeal, and seems far to outstrip the humble, meek, and lowly Christian. He has, with this, much joy. He seems to enter at once into a new world. Without previous contrition and humiliation, and without the Christian graces which mark the believer, he takes up the groundless notion that he is a child of God, and thence vainly imagines that all the promises belong to him. The conceit men have of their own religion, is often a real impediment in the way of salvation. Hence the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before the Pharisees. Matt. xxi, 31. Indeed, self-deceiving in spiritual things, is the ruin of vast multitudes in every age. The doctrines of the Gospel, so truly blessed, and a blessing to the contrite heart, fill the temporary hearer with an intoxicating sort of joy, without any previous deep conviction of sin, or any just idea of its real evil and dreadful malignity. He may, alas! delight himself in the thoughts of the love of God, and never have any real share in that love.

But lest any sincere Christian should be discouraged, it may be observed, that the character which we have noticed may be distinguished from the real Christian in various ways. The Christian, it is true, receives the word, and is filled with joy; but his joy is preceded by a sense of his guilt, and by mourning for sin, and repentance, and is followed by the fruits of righteousness. The result, however, most strongly shows the difference between the two. The temporary hearer soon fails and withers. The seed does not continue growing, and rise to the full size, and bear the ear and the fruit.

The reason is, they have no root in themselves. Among the first operations in nature towards growth, the seed sown opens its prolific bosom, in order to the procession of the root. The root catching hold of the surrounding earth, strikes deeper and deeper, and becomes more and more firmly united to it, and spreads far and wide on every side, drawing up moisture for the sap, and nourishment for the whole plant. But it is not so on the stony ground; the root cannot shoot, or spread, and so the plant withers and dies. Such hearers may be compared to a beautiful flower cut from the plant, which when put in water will flourish for a few days, and appear as gay and beautiful as if still growing in the garden united to the original plant, whose root was deeply seated in the earth; but by-and-by all is lost. So it is here; there is no root. There is no real piety within, no new *heart;* no considering and digesting what is heard; there is no renewed spirit; no subdued will; no rightly enlightened judgment, and therefore nothing that can stand the assault of temptation.

Then comes the scorching sun of temptation. A profession of religion before the world, and an undeviating course of uprightness exposes the real Christian to persecution. All the disciples of Christ endure this in the way to heaven. No one can faithfully profess the Gospel without experiencing opposition and difficulty. If there be real religion, these things, through the power of the Spirit, will only make it thrive the more. They will rapidly bring on and advance the work of grace; but if there be no real piety, all mere animal feelings are soon chilled. The strength of the natural man ever fails in the spiritual conflict. It vanishes like chaff before the wind. *They are offended;* they cannot bear the cross. They like the joys of religion, but shrink from its self-denial and sacrifices. They want a religion without trouble, reproach, and suffering; and not finding this, they *fall away.* They are determined to run no risk, as they think, for the truth's sake. The excitement of the passions from the novelty of the subject soon ceases. Their zeal evaporates. Some new object engrosses their attention—*His goodness is as the morning cloud, and passeth away as the early dew.* As it quickly rose, so it quickly withers. Unexpected sorrows and privations occur. They looked for applause, and honour, and cannot bear reproach and obloquy. They looked for ease and respectability, and meet with toil and contempt. Thus, unless the special mercy of God interferes, they wholly fall away. "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary."

We see several instances of this falling away in the word of God. Multitudes followed our Saviour for the loaves and fishes; but few adhered to him to the end. When he came to the self-denying part of religion they said—"This is a hard saying, who can hear it! and they walked no more with him." When he preached at Nazareth, while he spoke on the blessings of the Gospel, "they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth;" but no sooner did he begin to apply the truth to them, and refuse to gratify them according to their own notions, than they endeavoured to throw him headlong from the brow of their hill. These things are full of practical instruction to us. Let us remember that religion is a serious concern. It is not a thing merely to amuse us, or to gratify our present feelings. It is a business of life or death. It calls for patient and persevering application. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

Christians are, however, sometimes in danger of being too much discouraged by trials, instead of being excited and quickened. They sometimes groundlessly write hard things against themselves, and without just cause infer that their religion is false, unsound, or hypocritical. But, Christian reader, if God has given you sorrow for sin, a dread of falling, an endeavour to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, real dependence on divine grace, and a true desire to be holy—all these things distinguish you from the temporary hearer, and should show you that "he who has begun a good work in you, will perform it to the day of Christ. Only let your fears lead you to much prayer, and you shall obtain such abundant grace as will in time remove every doubt.*

SECT. III.—*The Thorny Ground.*

Our Lord now portrays by another similitude the heart of *the worldly* hearer. There is an advance beyond the other cases. The seed is not devoured as soon as scattered, as by the way side, nor does it wither away as soon as it springs up, as in the stony ground; but it continues to grow for a time, and yet ultimately, like the two former, it brings no fruit to perfection.

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* Quesnel has the following prayer in his remarks on this part of the parable: "Seigneur, Mon ame est devant vous comme une terre sans eau: que la pluie de votre grace tombe sur elle, et y fasse naitre cette source de larmes de la vraie penitence. (Luke viii, 6.) Ah Seigneur! que ce ne soit pas pour un tems que je vous ecoute, que je goute votre parole, que je sois a vous, mais pour toujours, pour l'eternite! (Matt.)

It is true, that the hearers thus compared, hear the word and receive it. It is not heard without effect; there is a visible result, an outward profession of religion, and probably a considerable knowledge of it. Such may be considered by the world as steady, and sober, and judicious Christians, free from all enthusiasm, who have attained the happy art of joining the world and religion together. Many external good actions may be done by such hearers; they bear the appearance of fruit, but as it is asserted in St. Luke, *bring no fruit to perfection;* there is not the right motive, nor the right temper and disposition. Such a hearer fails in that which God mainly regards—the state of the heart, and the inward graces of the real Christian. He goes forth, striving to proceed in a course of joining religion and the world together, hoping to get riches, honours, and the pleasures of this life, and yet not to lose heaven. Our Lord mentions in this case three things as hindering the success of the word. Let us notice them more particlarly.

1. *The cares of the world.* It is necessary to think of, labour for our subsistence, in that station of life in which God has placed us, and to make a limited provision for our families. This, so far from being sinful, is a Christian duty, which we could not neglect without sin. We are not to be slothful in business. But observe the expression, the *cares* of this world—all undue anxiety and solicitude about worldly good, whether in rich or poor, will eat out the life of religion. When the things of this world occupy our constant thoughts, and our whole mind is engaged about them, we cannot profit by hearing the word. A poor man is in danger of this, who, knowing not from day to day how his family shall be provided for, forgets what our Saviour has said—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." A man in business is in danger of falling into the cares of this world, especially when he undertakes more than he can get through, and so his mind is perpetually distracted by the multitude of earthly cares. Nay, in the commonest affairs of life, we may be led away by these cares. Martha was cumbered with much serving, even when Christ himself was the visitor and the preacher, and met with that reproof—"Martha, Martha, thou art troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her."

2. The *deceitfulness of riches* also hinders the success of the word. Riches, it is true, have their value, and are among the gifts and talents which God bestows, and when rightly used, are profitable to the possessor and others. But here is their deceitfulness. We over-rate their value, and we rest in them as capable of procuring happiness. We fancy them good in themselves. We imagine that we can obtain them by our own skill and prudence. We use them as though they were our own. When the mind is engaged in the pursuit of heaping up riches, it is in peculiar danger of self-deception. Diligently seeking worldly property is a sober, respectable, and approved sort of thing, and may in a certain way be pursued without a man's losing his religious character in the Church. It does not, like the sins of the flesh, openly condemn a man to others. But the word of God speaks decisively; "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him..... they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." Christian reader, watch against this subtle snare of the tempter. There is something infinitely better, worthy of our whole desire and eager pursuit, even durable riches and righteousness, the favour of God, and the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

3. *The lust of other things entering in,* is the last hindrance which our Lord mentions. He does not on the one hand design to forbid the grateful enjoyment of the blessings which he has bestowed, but the irregular and inordinate desire and abuse of them; nor does he, on the other hand, merely guard us against pleasures absolutely sinful in themselves, as gluttony, drunkenness, and the like,

which are totally at variance with any reception of the sacred word; but he especially guards against those pleasures that are in themselves innocent, but which become sinful when we make them the chief object of our anxiety and pursuit. Thus ease, comfort, and pleasure, are the great desire of many; and to obtain these, all other things are sacrificed. The term, *entering in*, describes the way in which the temptation comes; not by breaking through, nor by assailing and forcing the way; but by insinuating, and familiar, and unsuspected means, gaining access to, and possession of the heart. Such persons are *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.* They cannot bear those self-denying duties which interfere with, or thwart their spirit of self-indulgence and self-gratification. O reader, a single, momentary sinful pleasure may cost your soul more than you can regain all your life. The expression, the *lust of other things*, apart from the *desire of the sincere milk of the word*, shows how the minds of men are led astray. They see some worldly object, they fancy that there is a real and superior good in it, a desire after it is indulged, it enters their mind, it fills their hearts, and so the word is choked. Dr. Owen says, "Men feed their lusts high until they loath the word. Quails often make a lean soul. A prosperous outward state has ruined many a conviction from the word; yes, and weakened faith and obedience in many of the saints themselves. Love of the world made Demas a leaking vessel. Many might have been rich in grace, had they not made it their end and business to be rich in this world."

These three hindrances prevent our profiting by the word, as they deprive us of all our leisure, leaving no time for spiritual things, even as thorns leave no room for the wheat. They are perpetually in our thoughts. They mingle with our private and our public devotions, and how can the word grow? They fill our religious hours with distractions that prevent all comfort, and tempt us to abridge and cease from all religious duties. Christians, if you *will* have the world, it must be at the expense of your immortal souls! Though the form of religion may not be laid aside, that very form will only tend to harden and deceive your heart. Watch against such enemies with more vigilance than you guard your house against expected thieves.

The whole of this hindrance is well pourtrayed by Dr. Stennett, in his account of this parable. He says, "Wealth becoming a man's object, and its deceitful charms getting hold on his heart, the prize will continually be in his eye, and the means of acquring it engross all his thoughts. His speculations, reasonings, deliberations, and efforts, will all be directed to this point. Now he is laying his plan, adjusting each circumstance, considering their various and united effect, and provided for all contingencies that may arise and thwart his views; and then you see him carrying his plans into execution with unremitting ardour, setting each engine at work, and looking forward with eager expectation to the event. If he succeed, his passion for wealth collects fresh strength, and without allowing him to pause a while to enjoy the fruit of his labour, pushes him on to some further exertion. If he fail, the failure stimulates him to some bolder enterprise. And thus he is employed from day to day, his thoughts incessantly wandering from one object of sense to another, his invention perpetually on the rack, and his passions like the raging sea, in a continual agitation."

"Now amid this tumult of the mind, how can a man think soberly of the great truths and duties of religion, of the state of his soul, and the concern of another world! If we could suppose him in the least degree well affected to religion, (which indeed is scarce imaginable) it were yet almost impossible for him to pay proper attention to it. Perhaps the form is not wholly laid aside; but what is it more than the form? He *draws nigh to God with his mouth, and honours him with his lips, but his heart is far from him.* Mal. xv, 8. When on his knees he is still in the world. When he is worshipping God in his family, he is still pursuing his gain; his closet is his counting house, and his church an exchange."

The affecting result of these hindran-

ces is, that the word is choked. Such a person, though he goes much farther in outward religion than the temporary or worldly hearer, does as really ruin his soul and as assuredly perish as if he neglected it altogether. How affecting! how deeply miserable! to come near heaven, and after all to fall short—to do much, and yet just too little—to have some of the pains and sacrifices here, and none of the real eternal reward. Mr. Scott remarks, that "such professed Christians often draw their hopes of heaven from the Gospel, but their present comfort is derived from the world. The kingdom of God and his righteousness are placed last; and the getting, keeping, and spending of deceitful riches, or anxiety about secular affairs, rob them of their time, and at last of their souls; for unless the Gospel render us fruitful, it will never bring us to glory."

O let us not have more to do with the world than duty clearly requires. "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Heaven, with all its pure and holy joys, is the Christian's object of desire, the prize of his high calling, and should be the main pursuit of every human being. Entangle not yourselves with the affairs of this world. In large cities, in a commercial country, and in a period of much prosperity, the dangers of the cares of this world is but little regarded, and it leads to a fatal issue with multitudes. Do not attempt to gain, as many do, a little more of the world, at the peril of your immortal soul. Root out those thorns and briars that would choke the word. Receive the good seed in a prepared heart. The Saviour's cross viewed by faith, as your foundation of every hope, will show you the evil and danger of all sin and will enable you to overcome the world. Nothing else will do this. 1 John v, 5. The grace of the Holy Spirit will bring his death home to your heart, and so enable you with Moses to choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Sect. IV.—*The Good Ground.*

Under this comparison our Lord describes the heart of the *sincere* hearer. It is important in considering this character to observe, first, that as the ground, before it is good and fit for the sower, must be ploughed, and prepared for the seed; so it is with regard to the heart of man. Each heart is by nature very bad: "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," or diseased. This is the description, not of any particularly wicked individuals, but of *the heart* in general, and therefore of the heart of every man. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." This is the state of the ground, naturally, every where. *There is none good, no, not one.* Let us submit to the plain word of God; and remember that this description is confirmed by the experience of most holy men. There is need then of an entire change. The ground of the heart is made good only by the work of the Holy Spirit, regenerating a man, convincing him of sin, and producing in him true faith and repentance. God has promised this to those who ask it—"A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

The first great change in the soul, this renewal in *the Spirit of our mind*, (Eph. iv, 23.) is indeed effected through *the word of truth.* James i, 18. Many a one coming to the house of God, or hearing the word in other ways, with a heart very unprepared, has by his mercy been awakened, quickened, and regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost in and through the word thus heard. And many who have been among the way-side, stony, or thorny-ground hearers, finally are made like the good ground, through that word which they long neglected.

But besides this regenerating efficacy of the word by the Divine Spirit, there is a sanctifying and fructifying power. The good ground is the converted heart, through the fresh supplies of the Spirit, rightly receiving and profiting by the word. It is called honest and good, not only to distinguish it from the unconverted heart, but as these terms well describe the simplicity and sincerity, the love and humility with which such a one receives truth coming from God himself. Where the heart is good and honest, there will

be no vain cavils and objections against the truth. Inattention, and careless and worldly thoughts, will be resisted and overcome; the word is received, and has a corresponding influence.

Such are described as *understanding* the word. They see its excellence, they feel its value, they comprehend its truth, and discover its glory. They know it in its practical use. Their understanding of it is experimental and influential. They also *keep* the word. They retain it in their memory, they think upon it, revolve its truth over and over in their minds, and long to embrace it so fully with their affections, that it may influence their whole lives. They unite with David in his prayer, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes."

They bring forth fruit. This is that which most especially distinguishes them from others, and proves the reality of their religion. Real fruit comes not from man's power. The language of the Saviour to his Church is, *from me is thy fruit found.* The outward appearance of it may be in others, but the genuine fruit of the Spirit is only produced by the power of that Spirit in the hearts of the children of God. What this fruit is, the inspired writer fully declares, (Gal. v, 22.) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The fruit is of the same nature with the seed that is sown. As the Gospel is all grace, and love, and kindness, so it produces those tempers and dispositions where it is received. As it discovers to us the glories of Jehovah, so it produces reverence, humility, and contrition before him. As it shows the Son of God crucified for sin, so it produces every sort of good fruit, hatred of sin, fear of offending; faith in Christ, love to God, and love to man. Wherever the Gospel of the grace of God is truly received, it teaches a man "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Not that any individual Christian is perfect—alas! as many a promising ear is blighted, so often in the very graces for which he is eminent, at times he fails most, as we see in Moses and Job. But in every case fruit is produced to God's glory.

This fruit is brought forth with great variety—*some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold.* It is manifest that there are very different degrees of fruitfulness among real Christians, according to the grace bestowed upon them. Look, for instance, at Abraham, the father of the faithful, simply and entirely devoted God; and Lot, only just escaping from Sodom. Look at Paul, abounding in every good word, and then at Mark, shrinking from and declining danger, though at a distance. There are different degrees of talent, opportunity, and ability given to man. The fruitful Christian to whom affluence is granted, will bountifully spread around the blessings which God has bestowed on him. He will provide for a fatherless family, will sustain a sinking household, will assist or maintain an impoverished minister, will support a pious youth at school or college, will largely distribute useful publications, materially aid religious institutions, and be the foremost in every plan devised for the real benefit of mankind. The fruitful Christian in poverty, however, shows the same mind by patience, industry, integrity, and personal kindness to all around, ever being ready to afford such help to others, as his own many wants, will allow. But there are different degrees of personal religion. If we are careless of prayer, and negligent of the Scriptures, and other means, we do not obtain that large gift of the Holy Ghost which is the only efficient and energetic principle of this fruitfulness. As the Holy Spirit works within us, so shall we be fruitful in every good word and work. Let us then seek that Spirit diligently, so shall the seed grow, and the blade spring up, and the stalk be richly laden with the precious fruit, not merely having a scanty ear, here and there, but bringing forth plenteously. Thus let every part of our life be "filled with fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

This fruit is said to be brought forth *with patience*, that is, with constancy and perseverance day by day. There may

be a show of fruit in others for a season: the Christian only, endures and perseveres. With him there is first the blade, then the ear, and after that, the full corn in the ear. The progress of his religion is thus evident. There is not the full ripe fruit, as soon as the shoot appears. No; there is a gradual growth of the plant. Many a storm must beat around it, many a shower descend over it, many a beam of the sun shine upon it, before it is ripened, and brought to full maturity. Those beginning the Christian life, may be encouraged by this to persevere, amid every difficulty. Perhaps some of my readers may be disheartened by their unfruitfulness, and ready to give up every hope; but only persevere; you may at times seem retrogading like little children in their learning, who for weeks even, may appear to be going back; but still persevere, pray more, read the Bible, *walk in the spirit* more, and all shall yet be well. Storms and tempests may beat around you, but they shall only strengthen the roots of the divine life, and the warm beams of the sun shall not wither, but ripen the fruit.

We need not dwell on this fruitfulness as comforting the believer with a satisfactory evidence of his own salvation, preparing his soul for heaven, benefiting his fellow-creatures, and glorifying Him who gave his Son to die for us. It is manifest that this is the only truly happy character of the four descriptions noticed by our Lord.

But if neither the way-side, the stony, or the thorny-ground hearer obtain a real blessing, what is the state of those who wholly disregard this great salvation? An emphatic and double condemnation rests upon them—"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

May the whole subject lead us to watch over our hearts in hearing! If the author may judge of others by himself, there is a deal of the way side, stony, and thorny ground remaining, even in those who have in some degree obtained a better state. The ground which has hitherto been waste, wants culture; and that which has been cultivated, wants more cultivation: or, to speak without a figure we all need more of the Divine Spirit; more faith, humility, brokenness of heart, contrition, seriousness, and earnestness in hearing.

CHAPTER XII.

The Promised Universal Diffusion of Divine Knowledge.

It is cheering, amid that wide-spread spiritual darkness which still covers so large a part of the earth, to recur to the promises of God's holy word, and look forward to that bright and happy period which has so long engaged the hopes and entered into the prayers of the whole church. It is a subject too nearly connected with this work, and too pregnant with hope and happiness, to be omitted.

Regarding the efforts of Christians of every denomination, and the success which God has given to every prudent exertion in every part of the world, the author observed some years since that it seemed as if the long, dark, and dreary night of Paganism was passing away. The more he has seen of the state of the world, the more he entertains the delightful hope. We may discern the general, the softening, the evident appearance of the dawn clearing away shades and darkness. We may behold manifest tokens that the Sun of Righteousness is arising with healing in his wings on a benighted world. The first streaks of his approach already paint with lively hues the distant horizon; the morning is spread on the mountains; a cheering and comforting tinge glows on the Eastern sky; the Western catches and reflects again the brilliant rays; the edges of the clouds grow brighter, and become gilt with resplendent lustre; and, while the shades of Pagan darkness recede, the people that walked in that darkness shall, in every part, see the Light of Life, and rejoice in his glory. Would any stop his progress? Men may sooner hinder the advance of the splendid luminary of the heavens, than retard the march of that infinitely more glorious and more beautiful Lumi-

nary which is the *light to lighten the Gentiles*, and shall yet *be the glory of his people Israel.*

Nor is confidence here, either enthusiasm or presumption. It is but sober, and reasonable expectation of the fulfillment of prayers, which every Christian from the time of Christ has daily made; it is only unfeigned faith in divine promises perfectly clear and explicit. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa. xi, 9. "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me from the least to the greatest." Heb. viii, 11. While the Church prays, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," God promises, as the happy result of all his dispensations, "the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Hitherto is the end of the matter." Dan. vii, 27, 28. Similar promises to a great extent might easily be added.

It will be evident, from these and other passages, that the conversion of the world is closely connected with the diffusion of divine knowledge.

It may be asked, What is the precise blessing that we expect? and this may be the more reasonably asked, as there certainly have been many carnal and earthly expectations of a temporal kingdom and glory, which the word of God does not sanction. There are necessarily considerable difficulties in giving any opinions on unfulfilled prophecy; the only guide is the written word, and it has not pleased God to gratify curiosity in a variety of particulars. Yet enough is stated to cheer and gladden every Christian, and to animate him to the most strenuous efforts. But let us confine our views to that specific point, which is more directly connected with this Treatise, the diffusion of divine knowledge.

The knowledge of the Lord shall be *general;* it shall cover the earth, *as the waters cover the sea.* As the sea spreads universally over the bed or channel which it covers, so broad and so extensive shall this knowledge be over the earth. Jeremiah expresses it thus: "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." However this may have been partially accomplished, its extended fulfillment is yet to take place. Such promises may not intend universal conversion, but manifestly point out a general diffusion of divine knowledge in every land, and among all classes. Monarchs, rulers, and princes, shall be enlightened by divine truth, and rule according to the principles of the Divine Word. All in authority, noblemen, senators, judges, magistrates, ministers, and parents, shall be taught of the Lord. All in subjection, labourers, mechanics, servants, and children, shall not be rude, and ignorant, and openly wicked, but educated in the fear of God, and instructed and informed by scriptural knowledge.

The knowledge of truth shall be *deep* as well as general. The figurative promise, The earth shall be *full*, &c. "as the waters cover the sea," implies not only universally diffused, but copious, abundant and abiding knowledge. There will probably be a growing depth in this divine knowledge, like the symbolical waters, which issued from the sanctuary, which after one thousand cubits reached to the ancles, and after another to the knees, and then to the loins, and then the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. Ezek. xlvii, 1—5.

Religious knowledge has from the beginning, though with many drawbacks in different periods of the Church, still on the whole been advancing. The knowledge which Adam had of the great truths of revelation, and the divine glory thereby developed, was doubtless less than of Moses; of Moses than of David; of David than of spiritual Jews with all the prophets complete; and of the Prophets of the Old Testament, than of the Apostles of the New Testament. Hence while our Lord magnifies John the Baptist above all former prophets, he still says, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he:" Matt.

xi, 11. he has more religious knowledge, and greater spiritual advantages. He also tells his disciples—"Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Luke x, 23, 24.

But in the latter-day glory of the Church, this light, and these advantages, shall greatly exceed any thing yet enjoyed. It is predicted that "the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations," shall be destroyed. Isa. xxv, 7. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days." Isa. xxx, 26. After describing the joy spread by the messengers of salvation preaching good tidings, it is said—"they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." Isa. lii, 8.

The diffusion of this knowledge shall *alleviate every evil.* Much has already been said on this. (See chap. ii.) Let it be remembered, that all evil of every kind, we as sinners justly deserve; but all alleviation, and each removal of evil, we do not deserve. Persons have sometimes wondered, why an Almighty Father, full of wisdom and love, should create a wasp that stings, a serpent that poisons, and a tiger that devours. The wonder rather is, that every creature of God should not be armed with weapons, to annoy sinful beings like men, and that any creature should be permitted to serve him, or be a comfort and benefit to him. When we have rebelled against our Creator, every evil is merited, and all good is utterly unmerited. We deserve pain, and sickness, and suffering; we do not deserve the skilful physician, the healing medicine, watchful attendants, and affectionate relatives; all this is from the free and gratuitous mercy of our Benificent Father.

O how wonderful will be the triumph of this mercy and forbearance over man's apostacy and rebellion, when creatures, and circumstances, and dispensations, now armed and in array against us, shall have their very nature and direction changed, and be made harmless and innocent, objects of delight, and means of benefit and happiness! Nor is this mere theory and imagination. Isaiah, in all the glow of eastern imagery, but with all truth of divine revelation, exhibits this as the consequence of the universal diffusion of divine knowledge—"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Isa. xi, 6—9; see also Isa. lx, &c.

Christian reader, let us realize the blessings of that day of millennial glory which is before the Church, its peace and tranquillity, its love and harmony, the glory which it brings to God in the highest, and the good will which it diffuses among men; and can we but strive, and labour, and pray for its accomplishment?

This divine knowledge shall also be *influential to all practical good.* It is not a merely speculative knowledge of truth, such as a man may have of a science, which never influences his temper, or regulates his moral conduct, which is promised in such passages as Isa. xi, 9, and Hab. ii, 14. Divine knowledge becomes a governing, leading, and holy principle; the spring of every thing good. St. Paul says of it, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, ...so that I may win Christ and be found in him." Phil. iii, 8. He calls it the savour of the knowledge of Christ. 2 Cor. ii, 14. To the self-condemned sinner, who has in vain endeavoured to obtain relief by his own works, and who at length apprehends Christ "made sin for us,..... that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v, 21.) this

knowledge is as life from the dead. To the distressed, tempted, and burdened spirit, relieved by a view of Him who is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities," it is a fragrant perfume, reviving the fainting heart; his "name is as ointment poured forth." Sol. Song i, 3. To the advanced believer, to whom *to live is Christ*, and who is daily and hourly looking to him, amid labours of love in his cause, it is the one thing which he determines to know, (1 Cor. ii, 2.) and under the constraining influence of which he daily gives up himself, and lives, and labours, for him that died for our sins. 2 Cor. v, 14.

We may hope that this practical influence of divine knowledge shall be general. In that day of which it is said, "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light," it shall be added, "Thy people shall be all righteous." Isa. lx, 20, 21. "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." Isa. lxi, 11. And then, in the fullest sense, it may be said, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to *all* men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Titus ii, 11, 12.

And all this influence of divine truth, has a most important bearing, as it respects eternity. The effects of the knowledge of the Lord thus diffused, are not confined to time. The kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom. Other empires, however glorious, relate to a transient world; they soon pass away. But this only commences on earth, and the subjects of this kingdom live forever with their king in glory above. Here they are prepared and made meet for enjoying perfect happiness for ever above. Death is to them the gate of life, and the translation to the glorious capital, the very presence chamber, the beatific vision of Immanuel, the King of Glory. God our Saviour declares, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John xvii, 3. It is the same happiness in kind, that will be fully enjoyed hereafter; it is glory begun in the soul; it is the commencement of eternal life. Where this is, there is a meetness and preparation of mind for death, and judgment, and eternity. Death brings us to the actual sight, and the full joy, and glory of our often proved Helper and Saviour: the Judge is our advocate and our friend; and eternity is all a never-ending scene of boundless, and growing, and ineffable happiness.

One farther observation may be added respecting this divine knowledge, that *there is a special promise of divine teaching* with reference to it. After the glowing description given of it in the 54th of Isaiah, of the enlargement of the Church by the accession of Gentile converts, it is promised, (ver. 13.) "and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord. An infallible interpreter applies this to divine teaching. John vi, 45. It is also the great and cheering promise which God has given in the new covenant—"they shall all know me." Jer. xxxi, 34.

Surely then there is light, life, and glory reserved for the Church, that must far exceed all our hopes; there are mercies in store for mankind, which shall make this lower world as a garden which the Lord hath blessed. The promises of God have secured them to us, and the providence of God must therefore accomplish them.

Having thus cheered the heart by pointing out some particulars of the precise blessing which may be expected, we are more prepared to consider the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment, the means by which those difficulties shall be removed, the peculiar signs of our own times, and the duties to which we are called.

What are the *difficulties*, whether in the Christian or unchristian world? They are various and multiplied; and, to unaided human power, quite insuperable, but not really insuperable for God works by man, and with man, in every effort to advance the kingdom of his Son.

Let us then look without dismay at the present low state of religious knowledge in the whole world. Its actual ignorance and misery will only furnish the Christian with motives to exertion, and will finally afford more illustrious occa-

sion and opportunity for the display of divine wisdom, power, and love, in the removal of all. The Lord of all seems to have permitted the great enemy to have entered into every land, to have long reigned over heathen countries, to have strengthened himself in his possessions by every power that he could attain from lengthened experience, only that as on an arena, large as the whole earth, and visible to the whole creation, he might receive that signal overthrow from which he shall never recover: when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isa. xl, 5.

Take then the prophetical description of the world—"darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Isa. lx, 20. Take the Apostle's account —"the whole world lieth in wickedness." 1 John v, 19. It is admitted, that the Papal* and Mahomedan Antichrist have overspread countries where once pure Christianity flourished. It is admitted, that in the most favoured Christian country, or the most religious town in that country, we are very far from the happy state which God has promised, and there are great difficulties every where in advancing divine knowledge. Each faithful minister feels this. There is a natural averseness to divine truth in every bosom; religious education does not necessarily remove this, and the ordinary course of education strengthens and increases it. The great multitude of professing Christians dislike the holy and humbling truths of Revelation; and often those having influence and authority, entertain unfounded suspicions against the faithful declaration of Divine Truth, as injurious to the welfare of the country, and hence they oppose it in every way.†

But in heathen lands, even where Christians have sway or influence, and especially where they have neither, these difficulties to the diffusion of divine knowledge are much augmented. The religion of their forefathers for untold generations; the long-continued habits of idolatry and iniquity; the chains of caste, or learning, or barbarism; the hardened heart and the seared conscience, and the blinded eyes of millions of benighted Gentiles all around, mutually confirming and strengthening each other in an error, delightful to the carnal heart, gratifying to pride and sensuality, strengthened by every early association, and every relative affection; O, these present mighty obstacles! We feel them, we sigh under them, we acknowledge our utter impotence. None can have been in, or know the true state of Africa or India, Turkey or Persia, China or New Zealand, even with the liveliest faith without seeing, and without feeling that there are strong barriers to be forced, ere the word of the Lord can have free course.

The man of the world says at once, "The thing is quite impossible: It is not only utterly impracticable, but to attempt it is dangerous and mischievous." What would such have said to the twelve Apostles, beginning to labour for the conversion of mankind, unprotected by temporal power, and persecuted in every place? What would they have said to the Reformers, commencing the Reformation? Yet look at the conduct, even

* Lord Bacon says, "If a hue and cry was to be raised after Antichrist, and the Pope was to be taken up in consequence of it and brought before me as a Justice of the Peace, I should consider it my duty to commit him, as having all the distinguishing marks by which Antichrist was described, and to put him upon his trial."

† The remark of the reformer L. Ridley, respecting Paul's imprisonment under Nero, for preaching the Gospel, is as true now, as in the days of the reformation—

"See how sometimes devilish persuasions are brought into the heads of high princes and rulers, yea, persuaded unto them, as here was to Nero the emperor, that the preaching of the Gospel of Christ should be the destruction of his realm, and the cause of rebellion of the subjects against their heads and rulers. Whereas there is nothing that is more for their salvation, than is preaching God's word; for that is the mean by which God hath ordained to save his people, and nothing more keepeth the people in good order, and in due obedience, with all humility and subjection to their heads and rulers, than the word of God truly and sincerely preached." It is no new thing that men will "not endure sound doctrine, and turn away their ears from hearing the truth." 2 Tim. iv, 3, 4.

of men of the world; in worldly things, by courage and activity, they triumph over apparent impracticabilities: it has been eloquently said, "The whole of the British Empire in India is a series of impossibilities accomplished:" O how will their conduct in worldly things refute their views in spiritual things, and reproach the Christian's lukewarmness in the cause of God!

But we will give the worldly man every advantage which he claims. We will allow all his natural impossibilities. Nay, more; we can tell him that there are difficulties of a still more severe and arduous character, of which even he knows nothing. He knows not that there is a fallen nature at enmity with God, and his word. We must admit this. He sees not that there is a spiritual adversary, mighty, and subtle, and malignant, having undisturbed sway in heathen territories. We must admit this. He thinks not of the weakness and corruption of every human instrument which man can employ. We fully admit this. Do you then ask, How we can possibly expect any success? on our own shewing, are there not spiritual as well as natural impossibilities? and must it not be concluded to be impossible? No, O man of this world, throwing all these things into your scale, you are utterly mistaken in your calculation. *God is not in your thoughts.* You leave the Creator and Governor, and Disposer of all, out of his own world. He has commanded his servants to commence this work; he has promised to remove every difficulty. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isa. xl, 3, 4, 5. This work is one of those things of which it may be truly said, "with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Bring then into the strongest light all difficulties and obstructions. We would not have one kept in the back ground. Difficulties yield, and are surmounted, when superior wisdom, strength, riches, and power, concur in Him who has to meet the difficulty. Now this is the case with Christians in all efforts to spread the Gospel; for He who has *power in heaven and earth*, says to them when engaged in such efforts, *Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world.*

But the Scriptures give us intimation as to *the means by which all difficulties in the way of the universal diffusion of divine knowledge shall be removed.* We will notice three special means.

(1.) The *preaching of the gospel* of Jesus Christ. This is an engine despised by the world, and wielded by weak instruments, yet powerful, through God, to beat down every obstacle; and wherever it is perseveringly applied, with his blessing it brings to naught and vanquishes every difficulty. Those who had tried this engine under amazing difficulties, say of it, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x, 4. The divinely-appointed method of converting mankind, is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."* We

* The above remarks are thus confirmed in an able publication, entitled, "The Advancement of Society in Knowledge and Religion," by James Douglas, Esq.: a book taking large views, and having valuable suggestions.

"Of all methods for diffusing religion, preaching is the most efficient; other methods are indirect and preparatory; but the simple proclaiming of the Gospel, has in all ages been attended with the most transforming efficacy, elevating the few who have cordially accepted it, into a higher and happier state of being, and even raising the many who have rejected it, into a better system of moral opinions. It is to preaching that Christianity owes its origin, its continuance, and its progress; and it is to itinerating preaching, however the ignorant may undervalue it, that we owe the conversion of the Roman world from Paganism to primitive Christianity; our own freedom from the thraldom of Popery, in the success of the Reformation; and the revival of Christianity at the present day, from the depression which it had undergone, owing to the prevalence of infidelity and of indifference.

would not enlarge on this point, having before dwelt at length on it. See chap. iii. We here however take the term preaching the Gospel, in a large sense, as including the circulation of the Scriptures, the diffusion of pious books and tracts, the religious education of children, visiting and instructing the poor, and all those varied and invaluable means by which the truths of the Gospel are now brought before the human mind.

There are promises distinctly pointing out this as the means of accomplishing the hope of the church. The reason why *all nations shall flow into the house of the Lord* is this, *for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;* (Isa. ii 2,) at *the time of the end*, it is predicted, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Dan. xii, 4. Before the hour of God's judgment, and before Babylon falls, the Apostle says, "I saw another Angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Rev. xiv, 6. The words are remarkably full and express, as to the universal preaching of the Gospel through all the earth, and are supposed by judicious commentators, to have especial reference to the means to be used for the evangelizing of Papal* and heathen countries.

(2.) *The removal of the temptations of our spiritual adversary.* Now Satan has, by means of false religion and error, immense sway in every land: he is still "the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii, 2. He is full of activity and vigor, and full of diligence and exertion. "He goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v, 8. Every word here is expressive of his indefatigable efforts to destroy us. He is called *the God of this world*, (2 Cor. iv, 4.) a tremendous description of his power. He is the great leader of all enemies that oppose Christians in diffusing the Gospel. Eph. vi, 12. But all this power shall come to an end. Our Lord, with the eye of prophetic joy, exults in this—*I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven;* (Luke x, 18.) and his Apostles record the promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under his feet shortly." Rom. xvi, 20.

But in the last book of the Holy Scriptures, we have a more express prediction on this subject. St. John says, "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till a thousand years be fulfilled." Rev. xx. 1—3. This can mean nothing less than a peculiar, and effective, and general restraining of his power, over the whole earth, infinitely beyond any thing yet given to the church. O who can tell all the evil that will be thus restrained; all the devices and snares, by which men have been deceived and blinded, that will thus be removed; and all the good that will thus have free course!

Books, however excellent, require at least some previous interest on the part of the person who is to open and to peruse them; but the preacher arrests that attention which the written record only invites, and the living voice and the listening numbers, heighten the impression by the sympathy and enthusiasm which they excite; the reality which the truths spoken, possess in the mind of the speaker, is communicated to the feelings of the hearers, and they end in sharing the same views, at least for the moment, and in augmenting each other's convictions."

* Preaching will be the only effectual overthrow of Popery. It was the main engine of the Reformation. Take away preaching, and an immense advantage is given to Popery. The Romish worship, with all its show, pomp, and pageantry, has, in its best attire infinitely more attractions to the senses than the Protestant. Their gilded crucifixes, their beautiful pictures, their fine images, their splendid vestments, their long processions, and the various orders clothed in their respective dresses, all strike the eye: and with it is often found the most exquisite sacred music, and every thing calculated to move and influence the natural man. The power of the preached Gospel, which alone meets the true, the deepest, the spiritual wants of man, and affords rest to his burdened conscience, as it is God's own and only plan, so it can alone adequately and with success contend with, and triumph over such attractions, and dispel "the fascinations of the Romish Charmers."

(3.) But we freely allow, without a farther means, the difficulties which have been named could not be removed. There is a farther assistance yet promised to the church, *the general effusion of the Holy Spirit*, which shall give effect to the preaching of the Gospel, and overthrow Satan and his temptations, and furnish life, and strength, and holiness, for every good and perfect work. However the word of God may be *as a fire*, or like *a hammer* to break *the rock in pieces;* (Jer. xxiii, 29.) we see by many instances of those who live under the most faithful exhibition of that word, that it does not necessarily, and invariably, produce spiritual benefit. The hammer requires a hand to wield it; the fire requires to be applied; the Holy Spirit alone makes the Gospel efficacious—*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Psa. cx. 3. Admit to the full extent the power of our spiritual adversary, and that being now opposed he now especially rages; but still "shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him;" (or as it is in the margin, *shall put him to the flight.*) Isa. lix, 19. Admit that the church is now in a low and desolate state, it is only "until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be counted for a forest: then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field, and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever." Isa. xxxii, 15—17. (See also Isa. xliv, 2, 3; Ezek. xxxvi, 25—27.) So our Lord promises to send the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, and declares, *When he is come, he will reprove* (or rather, as in the margin, *convince,*) *the world* (not a few individuals, but, in the result, the world,) *of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* John xvi, 8, 9.* This effective and almighty worker is promised in especial reference to the object which we are considering—the universal diffusion of divine knowledge in the last days: "It shall come to pass, in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants, and on my hand maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." Acts ii, 17, 18. We see in the primitive church the divine beauty and vigor of this gift in its first communication, and the promise belongs *to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord shall call.* Acts ii, 39. And with this promise, whatever difficulties may appear to the eye of sense, the eye of faith discerns them all surmounted, and, like the divine Author of faith, *calleth those things which be not as though they were.* Rom. iv. 17.

Let these means be fully accomplished and how mighty and extensive must be the conquests of divine truth!

Such being the means by which difficulties shall be removed, it may be again asked, Have we any immediate interest in these things? may they not be events far distant? are there any evidences that the means by which difficulties shall be removed are now in more extensive operation? We reply, We have a direct and present interest in these things. There are *signs of the times*, and means now in operation, which may lead us to the most cheering hopes, and call upon us, *Look up, and lift up your heads.* Luke xxii, 28.

Let us then briefly advert to one or two of the signs which distinguish the present day. Every Christian should discern the signs of the times. Our Lord strongly reproved those who neglected to do so. Because the Scribes and Pharisees disregarded this duty, they rejected and crucified the Lord of glory; and we too may lose our advantages and incur great guilt, if we disregard the present state of the world, and the prospects held forth to us in the Holy Scriptures.

* By judgment here seems especially intended our sanctification by victory over our spiritual enemies. See ver. 11, and Matt. xii, 20. In Usher's Twenty Sermons, fol. p. 139, and 158, this passage is explained.

The *sign of prophecy* is, perhaps, the most important of all, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. 1 Pet. i, 19. We say the most important, because we have no certain knowledge of future events, but as it pleases God to reveal them to us, and had he not led us to expect at a particular period the blessing which we are considering, we should have no sufficient ground of assurance that we might confidently look for it. We do not speak of a precise year, or many years, more or less. We pretend not to predict particular *times, or the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power;* (Acts i, 7.) but the general result has been revealed by Him; He has shown us that it shall be proclaimed, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever." Rev. xi, 15. And he has also further revealed, for the use of the church, various particulars respecting precise periods of time which *the wise shall understand.* Dan. xii, 10. For instance, many of the prophecies of Scripture are chronologically arranged, and one of the ultimate earthly events predicted, is the universal extension of the Redeemer's kingdom: (Dan. vii, 27, 28; Rev. xx, 4, 5.) it is an event therefore which is yet to take place. A grievous apostacy was predicted. The Son of man was not to come, "except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. 2 Thess. ii, 3. The witnesses were to *prophesy a thousand, two hundred, and three score days,* (i. e. 1260 years,) *in sackcloth.* Rev. xi, 3. That apostacy we have seen take place; and in the ordinary lapse of time, the 1260 years cannot be far from closing, if they have not closed. The word of God, therefore, encourages the most cheering and lively hopes, as to the future state of the church. Intervening trials and judgments may undoubtedly be looked for;* but all will be well to the righteous, and glorious and happy will be the issue to the church. Though there may be differences on minor points, the great body of learned Protestant commentators, as Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishops Newton, Halifax, Hurd, and Horsley, Mr. Scott, Mr, Faber, and many others, agree in their sentiments respecting the speedy approach of those three leading events which eminently mark the period of the conversion of the world, viz.—the downfall of popery, the destruction of the Mahomedan imposture, and the conversion of Israel and Judah.*

The *sign of providence* corresponds with that of prophecy. There have, it is true, at different periods, been bright hopes of this blessed day. In the apostolic age, when the gift of tongues, and the power of miracles were bestowed on the church, Christianity made such rapid progress, that the blessing then began to be expected. In the time of Constantine, when the power of the Roman empire was given to the cause of Christ, when it seemed not unlikely that his religion would be every where received. And at the reformation, when the pure light of truth again burst forth with primitive splendor, and rapidly spread throughout Europe, there seemed another hope that it might reach the fartherest limits of the earth. But the fullness of time was not come. The period foretold by Daniel

* See Cooper's Crisis, the 3d Edition, a work justly claiming serious attention; for whatever difference of opinion there may be on the interpretation of the specific prophecy explained, the practical tendency of the work, as it respects the duties of the present times, makes it peculiarly edifying and seasonable.

* Mr. Douglas speaks thus with reference to prophecy—"Prospects the most cheering may be overcast, and the progress of improvement at once arrested by one of those sudden revolutions which mock all calculation, both in their arrival, and in their results; but though in matters merely political, such changes in the state may baffle the fairest conjectures which proceed upon the supposition of the continuance of national prosperity, yet, in the expectation of religious improvement, we have more certain ground to rest upon. We know not whether God intends the stability of particular nations; but we know that he makes all revolutions subservient to the introduction of his own kingdom, that the appointed years of delay are now elapsing, and that the time to favour the Gentiles is at hand." He afterwards says, "According to the sure word of Prophecy, allowing for the variety of interpretation, before the oak which was planted yesterday shall have reached its full maturity, the whole earth shall have become the garden of the Lord."

and St. John had not been completed, and the present era presents far more solid and scriptural reasons why we may hope that this event is not far distant.

The heathen world, in all its vast extent, is more and more opening to the efforts of Christians, preparing to welcome, and in many parts earnestly desiring Christian labourers; and those in authority in heathen lands have greatly promoted missionary undertakings. Christian nations have every where a growing intercourse with, and a preponderating influence over, heathen nations. To Christians countries God has given vast political power, and most power to those nations, such as Britain and America, where his religion is purest,* and to whom he has at the same time given zeal to labour in his service. This zeal has been manifested in the Protestant Church by the formation of about forty distinct religious institutions, chiefly within the last thirty years, raising nearly 500,000*l* a year for diffusing divine knowledge.

God has also given to Christian nations new facilities to communicate his truth. While the principle of general education has been recognized, the new system of mutual instruction, with its ramifications, in infant and adult schools, first spreading in our own country, is now diffusing itself with extended blessings through the heathen world. The printing press† now seems in some degree, to meet the want of that which distinguished the apostolic age, the gift of tongues, and new improvements give to that vast engine for diffusing divine truth an increasing power of immense advantage. Modern inventions come in to aid intercourse among the nations, and the progress of the Gospel. Each fresh discovery in arts and in science pays tribute to the Saviour, and facilitates his work. A state of general peace, almost through the world, and of outward rest from its various enemies, gives the church every advantage for exertion.

If we take also a very cursory review of the progress of missionary efforts, it may well lead us to lively hope. Remember the torpor and death on this subject fifty years back; remember the accounts formerly given of the innocence and happiness of various heathen countries, and observe the change of feeling now!

The actual state of the heathen is so generally known among Christians, as to refute all that infidels and others have alleged, of the simplicity, excellence, and purity of man without the Gospel, and to excite greatly-enlarged feelings of sympathy and compassion for their real darkness and wickedness, and misery. The cause of missions now excites an interest among all those who have any pretentions to the name of Christian. Such a missionary feeling has been roused, that several hundreds of Christians have in the last thirty years rejoiced to leave their country, and have devoted their lives to labour for the conversion of the heathen. The means employed by the societies which have been formed are various and extended—such as the preaching of the Gospel in heathen languages; the translating, printing, or circulating of the Scriptures, in one hundred and forty-two different tongues or dialects; the instruction of many tens of thousands of

* Strong marks of the purity of a Church are —its high reverence for the Holy Scriptures; its close adherence and unqualified submission to the word of God; and its zeal to spread the Gospel. Cecil says, "Take the Church of Rome: what a glorious church was the Church of Rome! but when? when it followed human imaginations in religion? No! it was a glorious church when the Apostle wrote his Epistle to the Romans: its faith *sounded throughout the world.* Thus was it, too, among Protestants, when they first separated from the Church of Rome, and followed the word of God instead of human imaginations; in purity and zeal they walked with God, and glorified him on the earth; they triumphed not in their lives only, but in their deaths at the stake: but see them following vain imaginations, and however they might reflect on the Papist's superstition, the Papist might pity them for denying the Lord that bought them." See his Sermons.

† Fox in his Acts and Monuments, dwells at some length on the importance of printing,—"Hereby tongues are known, knowledge groweth, judgment increaseth, books are dispersed, the Scripture is seen, &c. &c. By this printing, as by the gift of tongues, and as by the singular organ of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Gospel soundeth to all nations and countries under heaven: and what God revealeth to one man, is dispersed to many, and what is known in one nation is opened to all" Page 650, edition 1610.

heathen children; the introduction of female education; the forming of many seminaries and colleges for training up native teachers; the calling forth from obscurity of numbers of estimable men, qualified by eminent and peculiar gifts, and employing them in a high and holy work, each in spheres suited to his talents, Never before could that promise, *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*, Dan. xii, 4. be said to be so amply and extensively realized as it is in the present day. It is peculiarly verifying by events continually taking place. The success already given to this work, under each society, is amply sufficient to demonstrate the possibility of accomplishing the whole when it shall please God to pour out his Spirit. The missionaries have in great numbers practically exhibited the spirit and genius of Christianity, in the midst of those heathen who had before seen little but its dishonour by the lives of worldly and dissipated Europeans.

The different missionary societies have acquired much valuable experience respecting the difficulties of this work, and the most proper instruments to be employed. Christians of different denominations that have taken a part in this work, have had a growing esteem and affection for each other, that has very perceptibly united those that love the same Saviour and his cause much more to each other.

In addition to this, it can be now truly asserted that many thousands of the heathen in different parts of the world, in Western and Southern Africa, in India, in the South Sea Isles, in the West Indies, and in America, have already been by these efforts converted to Christianity, and great numbers have died in the Lord. The whole work of the conversion of the world, on the large scale, notwithstanding some disappointments, continues year by year to advance and increase, and all the efforts, prayers, and charity which have yet been expended in this cause are already amply repaid, and more than repaid.

But the most cheering sign of all is, that in the midst of the great increase of external exertion, God's servants on the one hand feel and acknowledge that the church of Christ is by no means yet duly roused to the importance and magnitude of the work, and to that enlarged spirit of prayer and exertion to which we are called: and on the other, have been disposed by his grace more generally to renounce all dependence on outward preparation, or on any power, save the power of the Holy Spirit. And, though there be yet but little of a general spirit of supplication through the Christian church, who can count the number of fervent prayers now offered up by individuals, or the thousands of little societies that meet weekly, monthly, or quarterly, to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom? From whom does this spirit of prayer come? Can it possibly be offered up in vain? Shall it not be still more enlarged? O may the sacred flame of Christian intercession spread, and grow, and increase, till all "That make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Isa. lxii, 6, 7.

A minute survey of the unchristian world, Jewish, Mahomedan, and Pagan; or of the Christian world, Greek, Roman, or Reformed, would shew us much indeed, to move our sympathy, and to mourn over; but, much to sustain sanguine hope, and excite to zealous exertion. In every profession of religion there is a general excitement and movement, that must issue in great results; perhaps in arduous conflicts, before the day of final triumph.

Thus, if you look at the means by which divine knowledge is to be diffused, and all difficulties removed, those very means are in extensive operation; the Gospel is preached to a vastly increased and increasing extent, and the spirit of prayer is enlarged for the subverting of Satan's dominion by the abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit. It is a high honour, Christian reader, to have been born in such a day, if we do but discern and rise to our privileges and discharge our duties. The present are evidently peculiar times. Let us, as God opens the way, throw our talents, our time, and our whole energies into them.

We cannot close the subject, then without referring to those *duties to which we*

are now called, both individually and nationally.

As *individuals*, it may be our serious concern each to know and obey the truth for himself. Little will it profit us that the world shall hereafter be converted, if we, in the mean while, fall short, of so great a salvation. We shall enter at length on this subject in the following chapter. But the remarkable character of the present day, seems especially to call Christians to decision of character. It is not a time to halt between the church and the world. It is not a time to delay and put off this great concern. Let us join ourselves heartily and decidedly to the Lord and his people. Bear now the reproach of his cross. His religion is not yet above shame and centempt from man. Now then we may prove our fidelity—now we may may manifest our love to him—now is the time for probation. He is coming in his providence to punish his enemies, and to bless his people. He will discriminate between those who serve him, and those who serve him not. Let us then take a decided part, and be firm and bold in the cause of God. Never strive to join together both the world and the church, as if, by some happy dexterity, you could secure the favour and good of both. It never will, it never can answer. Come out, and be separate, as, when you appear before your Saviour, you will wish you had. Confess him, and own him, and he will own you in the great day of his appearing.

As a *nation*, how important is the present situation, and means, and circumstances of Britain! Elevated beyond every other country for this purpose, what an opportunity has England, the storehouse of all that is excellent, the spiritual granary of the world, the moral Pharos holding forth the word of life to all nations, what a vast advantage has England at this moment to bless mankind! She is called to a higher office than the deliverance of Europe from the ambition of an earthly usurper who laid it low. She is called to help in delivering the whole human race from the more dangerous and destructive tyranny of Satan, a worse adversary, and from the more ruinous and galling bondage of idolatry and heathen superstition. O that there were but given to us from above something of that courage, and effort, and largeness of contribution, which marked our struggle with our earthly enemy! and O that our hearts were but animated with as extended, but a more pure and holy zeal against this more malignant foe, this infinitely more tremendous, because in its consequences more ruinous and more enduring evil! What Christian heart does not long for this! What Christian patriot can breathe a higher wish for a beloved country! Then would Britain, in a nobler sense than she has ever yet been, be a benefactor to the world; then would her name be enrolled in the annals of all nations as blessed; and then would she wear a brighter crown of glory, through all succeeding ages, than ever she has yet attained.

The Lord enable us all to discern the signs of the times; to devote ourselves to his cause; to give first ourselves to him, add then our talents, our time, our influence, and our substance, freely and liberally, to diffuse his Gospel among all nations. Let us share the sacrifices, and the labour, and we shall assuredly partake in the final triumph, and all the Saviour's perfect and eternal glory.

CHAPTER XIII.

The danger of neglecting Divine Truth.

It is the common opinion of men of worldly minds, that it is entirely optional with them, whether they hear the word or not; that they may do just as they please, and no evil will result from neglecting to hear. As far as regards human punishment, this may be very true; but there is a far more serious evil than any human punishment whatever, connected with this neglect.

We have all a living and palpable evidence of this. Look at that race of men who are *a proverb and a bye-word among all nations*, and have, for hundreds of years, been *only oppressed and spoiled evermore*. Once they were prosperous; once it could be said of them,

"Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee?" and what is the reason of the change? they "despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy." In reading the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the reasons of the captivity, it is very observable how frequently the prophets dwell on this, as the great reason why the Jews were rejected from being the people of God; they disobeyed the voice of the Lord, and disregarded his prophets. And if we look at the true cause of the calamities which have since befallen the Jewish nation, the destruction of Jerusalem, their dispersion among all nations, and their being every where base, degraded, and insulted, we shall find a similar cause,—they knew not in their day the things belonging to their peace, and rejected the words of Christ and his Apostles, till at length God's long-suffering and patience were exchanged for his righteous indignation and tremendous vengeance.

Such a history, with such an inspired account of the real cause of all their calamities, is pregnant with solemn admonition. Every Jew that we meet seems to proclaim in our ears, Take heed that *you* now attend, in this *your* day, to the word of God! While your privileges are continued, lay hold of them; while your day of trial is prolonged, be diligent; while you have opportunity, believe and obey to your eternal salvation!

The danger of neglecting divine truth will appear more clearly from considering, first, the excellence of the salvation proposed to us. We will then notice the sin and danger of disregarding it.

The message which Christian ministers bring is weighty enough to call for all our attention. The glorious truth which they have to declare is nothing less than the highest evidence of divine love that we can imagine—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Considering a little the greatness of the salvation proposed, that we may more adequately estimate the danger of neglecting it.

From what a misery it rescues us! All men are transgressors of the divine law. The great Creator, the King eternal, is justly offended with us. He, who is truth itself, has even declared that transgressors "shall go away into everlasting punishment, prepared for the Devil and his angels." Consider, then, our true state! Look at the infinite holiness, the inviolable truth, the almighty power, and the undeviating justice of God! See how his righteous law condemns every human being! Who shall stand before him, when he is angry! If God is our enemy, every other being is armed against us, and we are defenceless in a world of enemies. Who could rescue man, and preserve God's honour and justice untarnished? It is the excellence of the blessed spirits above to prefer the divine glory to every thing else. Suppose, then, as it has been observed, the holy angels filled with love and pity to man, and set about planning his restoration. "Upon the first discovery that it would clash and interfere with the glory of God, (as every contrivance of finite and limited wisdom would have done) they would instantly have cast it from them as an abominable thing, and have rested eternally in the contemplation of his excellencies." Let sinners be pardoned and saved, and what shall become of the justice and holiness, the power and veracity of God, all of which are engaged to see a meet recompense of reward rendered to every transgression? To be under the vengeance of divine justice, the terrour of Almighty wrath, the sentence of eternal punishment, and all so justly merited, that every mouth shall be stopped! only consider your real condition, your tremendous danger; and then you will see the greatness of that salvation by which you may be rescued from it.

In what a marvellous way it was accomplished! It occupied the council and purpose of God himself before the world began. Eph. i, 4; 2 Tim. i, 9. It was foretold of God, and expected by prophets and righteous men for four thousand years. It was announced by angels from heaven. The only Son of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the

express image of his person," adopts the astounding humiliation of taking upon him our nature, and that in its lowest form. He appeared as a little child; he grew up on our earth; he lived as a man of sorrow; and at length shed his most precious blood, dying the painful and accursed death of the cross, and all to accomplish this salvation. The Holy Spirit concurs in carrying on the glorious purpose, conveying and applying to each individual the mighty blessing. When the sacred writers speak of this salvation, they describe it as being great and marvellous, the wisdom of God, his manifold wisdom, and all the treasures of wisdom. The whole scheme, contrivance, and working out of this salvation, are of such stupendous grandeur, and so full of unspeakable interest to us, that in nothing does the inexpressible ignorance and darkness, folly and impiety of the human heart more appear, than in the neglect of it. A worm of a day treats with contempt that which God planned from all eternity, that which angels unceasingly contemplate with admiration, and that which will be the song of the redeemed through the everlasting ages of heavenly glory.

What blessings are imparted through it, even in this world! There is treasured up in Christ Jesus, the fountain head of this salvation, a rich supply for all our wants. Through him we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, of regeneration, repentance, faith, and holiness. Then there is pardon and righteousness, justification and peace with God, a hope full of immortality, full of joy. This salvation shows us, even here, God our Father, our Friend, and our Portion; Christ our Redeemer, our Shepherd, and our Saviour; the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier and our Comforter; the blessed angels our ministering attendants; Satan vanquished, the world overcome, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers. Consider how freely the blessings are bestowed—without the least tittle of deserving in man—by grace.....not of works. Eph. ii, 8. Consider how extensively the blessings are proposed—whosoever will. Rev. xxii. Consider how fully it meets all our wants, removes our guilt, helps us in our weakness, and provides for our natural ignorance, divine wisdom, and for our many sorrows, those joys which are heavenly and never pass away. If we connect all this with our deserts of eternal wrath, surely we must see the supreme magnitude of this salvation!

And *to what a height of glory does it ultimately advance us!* If even here in this world, surrounded with sin and sorrow, with darkness and misery, we can, through the mercy of God, discover some rays of the glory and greatness of this salvation, what will it be when we come to its full enjoyment in the realms above. It is called an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory. O Christian reader! when we hear Christ sentence the wicked to eternal wrath, when we see them sink into everlasting ruin; when we view the righteous about to enter the mansions of bliss; when, if his wondrous mercy has saved us, we ourselves join that blessed company, rise to that inconceivable glory, and bask in the bliss of that Divine Being in whose presence is fulness of joy; then we shall better understand the unspeakable greatness of this salvation. It brings in its final result perfect felicity, of endless duration and unchangeable security. So inexpressibly great is it, that all comparisons fail, and there is nothing that can fully illustrate its infinite excellence. Thus the Scriptures describe it—"God so loved the world..... so great a salvation.....Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Such expressions intimate that the greatness of this salvation is incomparable, and cannot be fully described or adequately conceived.

We might naturally think that such salvation as this had only to be proposed, in order to be joyfully, gratefully, and universally received; but, alas! we need only to look into the world, or even into our own hearts, to see the necessity of that question, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

It may be necessary here, first, to establish the conviction of this neglect; and then to show the danger of it.

We fear, then, it is too true, that a great proportion of those who hear the truth, do practically neglect it. We enter not into the case of the openly wicked, of those who are living in adultery, fornication, wrath, malice, contention, and altogether following the things of the world. It will be obvious enough that they not only neglect the salvation of the Gospel, but even the plain and common obligations of a decent morality. Nor need we consider the case of those who oppose and persecute the followers of the Gospel, either publicly or privately, and who when any of their friends and relatives become really in earnest about religion, do all they can to quench the flame of zeal and love, and to hinder their progress. They who thus act against the Gospel, manifestly enough do much worse than neglect it. We would more particularly look at the case of those who have hitherto made light of salvation, and felt little or no concern about it. They see not the evil of sin, and have little confidence in God's word; they discern not their want of salvation, and hence they do not earnestly and perseveringly desire it; at least they do not diligently seek it in the use of the means which God has appointed; such as hearing, reading, and meditating on the word of God; prayer, watchfulness, self-denial, and taking up the daily cross. If they attend external means, it is from various inferior motives. They do not personally, heartily, and gladly receive the Gospel in its various parts. They do not come to Christ, seek his salvation, and rely on him as the only sure foundation of hope, and the complete Deliverer of all who trust in him. Their earnestness is about worldly, and not about spiritual things.

But let us pass from individual instances of neglect to notice one peculiar national sin of our own highly favoured land—neglect of the word of God. Dr. Chalmers speaks of millions within the limits of Christendom, nay, within the sight of Christian temples, and the sound of Sabbath bells, yet who never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He says, "They live to manhood and to old age, deplorably ignorant of the way of salvation, and in ignorance, too, not the less deplorable that it is wilful. It is this which so fearfully aggravates their guilt, that, on the very confines of light, they remain in darkness; and therefore prove that it is a darkness which they love, and which they persist in. Thus it will be found more tolerable for the heathen world abroad, than the heathen world at home."

O how true it is of Britain—"Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us by his servants the prophets." Consider how God has favoured our country; how his word is read by authority in ten thousand parishes; and what multitudes of faithful ministers labour among us; and then reflect, that probably four fifths of our population never heard or read his word, and a vastly larger proportion practically disregard it, and then say whether this be not a serious national sin. Bishop Hurd observes, "In one respect our guilt exceeds that of the Pharisees or the Philosophers who rejected the Gospel; they were alike ignorant and unbelieving: we profess to know and to believe. Let us then take heed what we hear; lest our knowledge and belief add terrors to that day when the neglected word shall sit in judgment upon us." It was the special sin of Israel, and it is a special sin of Britain; the Lord their God had condescended repeatedly, plainly, and most graciously to speak to them, but yet they disobeyed him. True it is, neither Israel nor Britain do sensibly and personally see or hear him; and Daniel ix, 10, meets that common refuge of many who imagine they do not disobey God when they disregard and disobey the voice of his servants. Men think if God himself were to speak to them they would surely attend. But it is here shown, that in rejecting the messengers of God, they do in effect reject God himself. God accounts that He is despised when his

servants are disregarded, though he neither himself descends from heaven, nor sends his angels to announce his will.

This is the point which David fixes on in his confession, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." The chief malignity of this sin is, that it is a most daring rebellion against God, a base contempt of the great and glorious Governor of the world; a most ungrateful return for immense obligations; and an apostacy in heart from him. May the Holy Spirit convince Britons of this their exceeding sinfulness, and lead them earnestly to seek that salvation in which is their only security.

How many national evils follow the neglect of the word has already been shown, (Chap. ii.) Bishop Wetenhall justly remarks, "These four grand evils, a greater decay of the outward face and awe of religion, a falling off of our people on the one hand to popish superstitions, on the other to seditions, novelties, giddiness, confusion, and every evil work; and lastly of a multitude to downright atheism, would certainly and suddenly ensue should frequent preaching fail."

The neglect of the Gospel proceeds from various causes. Natural corruption and pride are very strong in us, and the Gospel is a holy, humbling system, laying man in the dust; giving all glory to God, and yet calling for much self-denial and sacrifice. Pride, therefore, and the love of the world, and the indulgence of sinful or carnal desires, keep men from cordially receiving the Gospel. They gladly invent, or rely on other, and easier expedients, that will not so much interfere with their habits of self-indulgence. Sloth and procrastination hinder others, not seeing the infinite magnitude of eternal things, nor realizing the uncertainty of life, and the irreversible issue following death, they trifle and are careless on that one point where all our energy ought to be excited. Fear of man keeps many a one back from decision of character. The business of this life, magnified beyond its just value, because we have inadequate views of the Gospel, fully occupies others. By these and various other means, Satan detains men enchained in his power, and afar off from the blessings of salvation; and nothing but the omnipotent arm of Jehovah can deliver the captive soul.

What then is the state of him who neglects the Gospel? He is despising God's tenderest mercy; he is lying under his awful condemnation. It is not merely man that is displeased and offended, but God himself, with all his majesty and glory, his wisdom and power, his holiness and truth, his love and tenderness, his infinite excellence and glorious perfections.

The danger incurred by disregarding this salvation, is neither slight nor trifling. The Apostle asks, *How shall we escape if we neglect it?* His question is vehemently negative. It expresses the absolute impossibility of escaping the divine wrath. A man may be so subtle and cunning as to escape reproach or blame from his fellow creatures; he may be so ingenious as to cover his irreligion from every human eye; his conduct may be so outwardly fair, that he may stand well with every human being; but what will all this avail! he is not to be judged at last by man, but by the all-wise and almighty Jehovah. Who can escape his his omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence? what time can take you out of the reach of Him who ever liveth? what place can hide you from him who is every where alike present? what subtilty can conceal aught from him who knows every inward thought of the heart.

If we only regard the aggravation of this sin, we may be sure that a peculiarly awful doom awaits a neglecter of salvation. Remember what has been said of this salvation, as the riches of divine wisdom, planned before time began, effected by the only begotten Son of God, rescuing us from eternal perdition, and restoring us to heaven, and then say whether it be possible for a creature to cast greater contempt on God, than to prefer the perishing vanities of a fleeting world, and carelessly to disregard, and slight, and make light of the most wonderful display of divine wisdom and love manifested in the Gospel. O the blind-

ness, hardness, and darkness of our carnal hearts! We profess to believe these things, and yet disregard nothing more. How tremendous will be that great day, when God shall enter into account with those who persevere in this neglect! They shall awaken to their true condition, and he shall say to them—*Behold! ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!* "Shall," says one, "the Son of God shed his blood in vain? Shall he suffer, and bleed, and die, for a thing of nought? Is it nothing unto you that he should undergo all these things? Can it be a matter of such small concern, that you will scarce make enquiry after it? Ah! be assured that these things are not so, and God grant that you may see this ere it be too late." You may be blinded even while life is spared. It is an awful declaration that we sometimes see exemplified, respecting those who dislike divine truth, and therefore neglect it, that "because they received not the love of the truth—God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Our first fall from holiness and happiness arose from not listening to the voice of God; and all our subsequent falls, and the final and irreversible ruin of the wicked, arise from the same disregard of his word.

The guilt of those who neglect salvation is immense! It was a great sin in the Jews to disobey the voice of God spoken by Moses. It was a still greater sin in a subsequent generation, after the example and punishment of their forefathers, to despise and misuse the prophets. It was a still farther aggravation of iniquity, beyond all this, after all God's former dealings, and when the nation had been carried into captivity for refusing to hear the prophets, to reject the chief Prophet, our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apostles. They filled *up the measure of their fathers....so that*, our Lord said to them, *upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth.* They sinned, after all the warnings of so many generations: *If I had not come*, says our Lord again, *they had not had sin*, (not to that extent; *but now they have no cloak for their sin.* O Christian reader! how tremendously accumulated is the guilt of those, in these last days, who, after the experience of so many ages, and with such a cloud of witnesses, still neglect so great a salvation!

Their ruin shall be sudden and irretrievable! "How shall they escape?" the expression intimates that the day of wrath will be to the wicked both unexpected and inevitable. They would gladly fly away, but flight from the Divine Presence is vain and impossible. They would gladly hide themselves in the lowest depths, and be covered by hills and mountains, but still God is there. That omnipresence which is the highest joy of his servants, is the sum of all terror to his enemies. Do they attempt to justify themselves? O how vain! Every disregarded minister, every broken sabbath, every neglected Bible, is a witness against them. The very dust shaken off the feet of the despised minister is a testimony against them. Mark vi, 11. God has declared that "it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear his Son shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts iii, 23. God has made known his final purpose—"They refused to hear my words; therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape." Jer. xi, 10, 11.

They lie under the curse of the law; how shall they escape its penalty? They are not like "the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, and receiveth blessing from God; but," are like "that which beareth thorns and briars," and "is rejected," and "is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Heb. vi, 7. Where God bestows great advantages, he expects corresponding fruitfulness; (Isa. v, 1—7,) and if there be no fruit, a double curse rests there. The law denounces wrath and perdition against the transgressor. They have transgressed times without number. In what refuge can they trust? Will ungodly companions help them? no: they equally need help. Will Satan's power shield them? they preferred his service;

will he protect them? no: he is in himself punished; he shares the curse, and, as far as joy can enter his malignant heart, he rejoices in their ruin. Can the holy angels, or any of the saints assist? No: they can do, they choose to do, nothing but what God approves. Do they now look to Christ? O grievous ruin! it is too late! Their once-neglected Saviour is now their righteous judge. They despised his salvation, and loved sinful pleasures better than Him who died for them. The neglected Gospel furnishes another aggravation of their ruin.

They will be condemned at the final judgment. In the day of trial, "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." How shall they escape! What plea can they urge, when the pure and holy law of God, in all its reasonableness, and their daily violations of that law, are set before them. To the righteous, the day of judgment is a day of great joy. 1 Thess. iv, 13—18. Those that are justified by faith in Christ, and love him and his people, shall not hear of one sin; (Jer. 1, 20; Micah vi, 19; Heb. viii, 12,) but they shall hear of all the good which they did, and had forgotten. Matt. xxv. But God will enter into judgment with the wicked. They are under that awful saying of Christ, "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." Matt. x, 14, 15. O how vain must be every plea when they have disregarded the wisdom of God, set before them in redemption by Jesus Christ; when they have slighted the only and God's own way of salvation! How shall they stand in his sight! they are speechless before him! and they hear the tremendous words, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels!*

They *shall endure eternal wrath!* It is an awful question put by our Lord, *How can ye escape the damnation of hell?* Who can reverse the terrible sentence? When it is once passed, it is irreversible. It is justly merited. They were told of their danger. They heard that it was so great a danger that the Son of God himself came down from heaven to avert it, and yet they carelessly slept, or rashly squandered away the precious hours of life in which they might have obtained it, and procrastinated, day after day, month after month, and year after year, when they should have fled from the wrath to come. They slighted years of probation, and every warning which God gave, and now Satan, with malignant triumph, takes them as his perpetual prey, his lawful captives, and they enter, never to leave that dread abode where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!"

These are not mere fancied dangers to awaken and excite feelings for the present moment. They are, to the neglecters of salvation, awful and swiftly-approaching realities. "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall it not come to pass?" O careless hearers, pity yourselves! Consider your latter end. Search the Scriptures for yourselves; follow the directions there given by your all-merciful, and wise, and holy Creator and Judge; and now seek to obtain part and lot in the deliverance which has been wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ.

For this salvation is so complete, that even those who have hitherto neglected it, and are now conscious of their neglect, may seek, and even surely expect, the pardon of such aggravated guilt; a guilt which every awakened mind will confess to be most dreadful and atrocious. Yes, reader! whoever you be, or whatever you may have been, now hasten to the Saviour; you will be welcome; he now waits willingly and gladly to receive you, however covered over with guilt, and to accept you just as you are. He will justify you freely, and replenish you with all his rich and full mercies and blessings! Thanks be unto God that this salvation is so great and perfect, that nothing, except our neglect of it, in one way or other, can exclude us from its

eternal advantages. The trembling sinner who is ready to think himself too criminal to be pardoned, or too polluted to be cleansed, may yet come to Christ. God sets his threatenings before us, not to destroy us, but, in tender mercy, that ere the evil day arrive, we may have repented, and so escape; you may see this in the case of Nineveh, and in various other instances. The gracious Saviour now is ready to receive the worst sinners. The chief of sinners may come to him with entire confidence, and may expect from him the free gift of pardon, salvation, and all that he requires.

But let none presume hence to delay, and fancy that this very grace furnishes an excuse for negligence. Even a partial neglect of it will not escape sorrow and rebuke in this life, and those whose souls are not finally ruined, often obscure their hope and bring darkness on their mind, by giving way to carelessness about their eternal interests. O let none trifle with things of such immense moment as their spiritual and eternal welfare! For, consider farther,

The danger of neglecting this salvation may be more specially shown from the solemn truth that the *present moment is the only opportunity for embracing it*, that we can call our own, and the grace of God being wholly beyond our controul, if we now neglect this grace, it may never again be afforded us.* The Scriptures frequently dwell on there being but a limited period for hearing the word. David says, (Ps. xcv, 7,) *To-day, if ye will hear his voice.* The Apostle (Heb. iii, 12—14,) lays much stress on this expression, "Take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin: for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice." And he afterwards again presses this, (chap. iv, ver. 7.) "Again he limited a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time." He tells the Corinthians also, "We beseech you, also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain....Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!" And so Isaiah says, "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near." Now if prophets and apostles thus earnestly urge us to use the present time, and our Saviour himself pathetically and deeply sighs over Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!" Surely it must be a thing of infinite danger to neglect so great salvation for a single day, or a single hour.

O the danger of delay and procrastination! It is the grand device of Satan to keep our souls from a present attention to our salvation. Most men think of being religious at some time or other. Undoubtedly the great multitude of those now in eternal wo once purposed to repent of their sins and turn to God; but they stifled their convictions, deferred the work to another time, and so were lost.

To-day is the whole of time that you can call your own. Attend while you are called; enter in while the door is open, lest it be forever closed. It is possible that the day of mercy may be ended as to you, even before the day of death comes. God sometimes gives up those who have refused to hear, to a hardened heart, even while life continues. Thus Pharaoh was hardened before his death. *To-day*, then,—forthwith—immediately—while the word is sounding

* Mr. Gisborne makes the following awakening observation on the importance of attention to each sermon that we hear.—"To how many sinners has an individual sermon been made as it were the hinge of conversion, the turning point between life and and death! Did you withhold your attention from the last sermon at which you were present? how know you but in that sermon was contained an elucidation of some important doctrine which you misconceive; a scriptural example of virtue most needful to your edification; a scriptural denunciation of vengeance against your own besetting sin? How know you but that to the absence of the Christian armour which that discourse would have supplied, your fall under recent temptations is to be attributed? How know you but from the absence of that armour, temptations, even now impending over your head, will derive their particular strength?"

in your ears—while the invitation comes to you—now—*now is the accepted time.* How know you but that this may be the special, the appointed, the only season of grace for you? "Now, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

O reader, think of that word, *To-day.* Well may we be in earnest with you: Satan, and the flesh, and the world, plead hard against Christ, and against you. They all say, *To-morrow.* No! to-morrow will not do; for God says, TO-DAY. Begin this very day to hear, believe, and obey his voice. There will always be difficulties. Those difficulties will increase, and not diminish. You never can, you never will, in your whole life, have a more suitable season for breaking through all obstacles, and giving yourself up to God, than the present moment. "Behold," says Christ, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." Fear then to lose the divine mercy, and weary the divine patience, by inexcusable presumption. Fear to provoke the divine wrath and displeasure.

To defer reconciliation to God to any future period, is the most reprehensible and ruinous folly. It supposes that God will indulge us with the allowance of sensual and sinful appetites, and cause his mercy to wait till we have executed our iniquitous purposes. It shows that we do in our hearts prefer Satan to Christ, sin to holiness, and earth to heaven. And can we seriously think that God will be thus mocked? No; we deceive only ourselves; we fill up thus the measure of sin to our ruin.

To-day, then, God calls you; to-day he sets before you the riches of his grace, a free reconciliation, full pardon, the gift of his Spirit, and the sure hope of everlasting life. Before you refuse, before you delay, before you trifle with and neglect so great a salvation, think what may be on the morrow. If you reject his offer, to-morrow may be too late. God may be silent—his grace may no longer be set before you,—his Gospel no more sound in your ears; you may be given up to a hardened heart; you may be doomed to eternal perdition. Thus you may be left under the final curse of bitter and unavailing self-reproach, and for ever remain in that outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. O what an awful description is that given by our Lord of those who in his day neglected this salvation—"This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them!" May the writer and the reader of these pages ever receive from above that power of the Holy Spirit which may enlighten the eyes of our understanding, and preserve us from a doom so earnestly to be deprecated, so deeply to be deplored! For, after all, what can mere reasoning avail? O blessed Spirit! thou alone canst convert and edify. It has been most justly observed,* and the author feels that the fault has too often attached to himself, "Some press to duties, so that they seem to think, that their reasonings are able to enforce a compliance; or at least they do not take care to keep up, upon themselves and their hearers, a constant sense of the contrary, in order earnestly to engage in dependence on the Spirit of the Lord."

O Holy Ghost! into our minds,
Send down thy heavenly light;
Kindle our hearts with fervent zeal,
To serve God day and night.
Ordination Service.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Blessed Results of Faithful Hearing.

THE former chapter closed with an affecting description given by our Lord of the awful state of those who neglected the Gospel: we turn now to a brighter scene. Our Lord, after speaking those awakening words, directly contrasts the state of the wicked with the happiness of his own disciples, receiving his word—

* See Halyburton's Life.

'But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." They were blessed above those around them who disregarded the words of Christ; above even kings and prophets of former ages, who, though they knew Christ, and trusted in him as a Saviour to come, had yet comparatively very indistinct apprehensions of him, and would have rejoiced to have witnessed what the Apostles did. The particulars of this blessing are worthy of distinct and full consideration. In what respects is the faithful hearer blessed?

His faculties are then employed for the end for which they were given. Our various senses and abilities, our sight, our hearing, our memory, understanding, and affections, were bestowed upon us for the glory of God, and our own present and eternal good. They are then engaged for these ends, and used to the best account, when they are exercised upon discovering and receiving the sacred truths of the Gospel. The Gospel alone sets before us that which can fill and satisfy our immortal souls; and when our faculties are employed on other things, without reference to, or concern about, the will of God, all our powers are wasted and squandered away; we "spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not." They are not merely unprofitably expended, but lost in a way that will bring upon us future condemnation and final ruin. But let our faculties be rightly directed to know and do the will of God, and we are so living as he would have us live, as will glorify his name, secure his favour, and our own best happiness.

His many advantages are improved to the purpose for which they have been bestowed. Peculiar and distinguished are the privileges which we enjoy in this day, and in this land. We live in a day of much light; and, blessed be God, of increasing religion and piety. We live in a protestant country, and have the Bible richly diffused among us. We do not enough thank God for being born in such an age, and such a country, and that we are spared a combat with many prejudices of birth, custom, and example, which our forefathers sustained, and others still sustain. It is true, that some have to struggle through great difficulties, before they are brought to see the truth as it is in Jesus: if grace has enabled us to do so, we have only the more cause for gratitude. But there are multitudes who neglect all these advantages, and who will therefore have a worse doom hereafter than Sodom or Gomorrah. To have been led by divine grace to seize the golden opportunity for eternal life, is a blessing for which we shall thank God through eternity. It was not any wisdom in the Christian, more than in others; it was God's mercy, and the teaching of his Spirit, that made all the difference. This wonderfully enhances the blessing, and for this our song shall swell the heavenly chorus hereafter, with endless joy and gratitude.

His knowledge of the most important truths is enlarged. It is not merely the reading of good books, or hearing of good sermons, from worldly motives, and in a worldly spirit, that increases divine knowledge. The teaching of God's Spirit is necessary for this end; and that teaching is freely bestowed in a due regard to the preaching of the word. How blessed is it to be thus divinely instructed! All saving knowledge comes from hence; if you neglect the means which God has appointed, he may leave your soul to perish for lack of knowledge, in the midst of the most abundant means. But experience shows that by a humble, faithful, and regular attendance on the ministry of the word, with a spirit of prayer for God's blessing, knowledge of divine things is given to you from above. Thus every sermon may be the means of your increasing in heavenly wisdom. It is in this view that Solomon says, "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." A little knowledge, where

it is from above, where it is gracious and saving, has a blessedness above all calculation. At the time that our Lord pronounced the Apostles blessed, (Matt. xiii, 16,) they knew very little, but they were under his teaching; he explained his doctrine to them more fully; and, by degrees, they came to *the riches of the full assurance of understanding*. Let us then earnestly apply ourselves to this source of instruction. How forcible, in this view, is that address, (Prov. ii, 1—6,) "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, ...so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest for her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God, for God giveth wisdom."

Hereby *we know that God has called us out of the world, to partake of the blessings of the Gospel.* St. Paul says, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." Rom. viii, 30. This is an inestimable privilege. By the preaching of the Gospel we are called out from a world lying in wickedness, from the service of sin and Satan, to follow the Saviour and obtain his glory. 2 Thess. ii, 14. In this *heavenly calling*, (Heb. iii, 1,) we are invited by the Father of all mercies freely to partake of all spiritual blessings. Are we doubtful whether we are included? how can we doubt, when the last lingering words of his own book again repeat the oft-reiterated (Isa. lv, 1; John vii, 37) invitation, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Rev. xxii, 17. Do you feel so pressed and weighed down with sin, that you think you cannot be included? you are the very persons specially invited—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi, 28. Do you hesitate? ministers are sent on purpose to entreat you—"We are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled." 2 Cor. v. 20. Are you still full of fears that you *may* not believe? nay, rather fear, lest you *should* not obey his commands; for "this is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John iii, 23. Rather fear, lest you incur his final wrath by unbelief—"He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii, 36. And as God thus calls all that hear the Gospel by the outward preaching, so he inwardly, by the teaching and internal calling of his blessed Spirit, given with the outward word, disposes his people to attend to his word, and to become partakers of his blessing, and to have fellowship with his Son. 1 Cor. i, 9; 1 Thess. i, 5.

Conviction of sin follows a right hearing of the word. We shall thus be led to acknowledge the perfection of the law of God, and the wretchedness and insolvency of man, and be truly humbled and contrite before God. This is the special work of the Holy Spirit through hearing. Acts ii, 37. It is founded on a knowledge of God's holy law requiring constant and undeviating obedience in thought as well as in word and deed, and of our own innumerable violations of that law, and utter inability to fulfill it; on a view of the unspeakable loving-kindness of the Lord, and our own vile, ungrateful, hard, and evil hearts. Then our guilt is not extenuated, but confessed; and our natural corruption is not brought forward as an excuse, but as an aggravation of our many offences. This conviction arises from a cordial reception of the truth. This important effect of the instruction of ministers is independent of their endeavours. There is this unavoidable defect in the teaching of ministers, that they cannot answer as to the result in particular cases. But the Spirit of God, through them, does much more. He not only presents in the word the truths which he designs to teach, but he also opens the heart to receive them—"The Lord opened Lydia's heart that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." As soon might the blind reason themselves into sight; or the deaf into hearing, as we, by any powers of our own, remove the blindness and hardness of our hearts, and be-

come truly contrite and penitent. As the mighty works of Christ were performed by his miraculous and visible interference, so it is no less necessary for the Holy Spirit by his real, though invisible interference, to awaken and renew the dead souls of men, and convince them of sin. But though repentance and conviction of sin are thus the work of the Spirit, yet the preacher is the chief means which the Spirit uses; and of the word He declares, "It shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Conviction of sin is one great design of God in sending his ministers. Thus Nineveh was led to repent.* Thus Baruch was directed to go and proclaim the words of the Lord under this hope —"It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way." Jer. xxxvi, 7.

Another blessed result of hearing aright is, that *it is God's method of imparting faith to his people.* Faith is undoubtedly God's gift. John vi, 44; Matt. xvi, 17; Phil. i, 29. But the way in which it pleases him that it should *begin*, is by hearing the truth. Rom. x, 17. We look in vain for faith among those who know not divine truth, and never hear the word of God. But Paul describes the faith of Christians as following hearing the word of truth. Eph. i, 13. Faith springs from the word, as the living plant from the root, and as the rays from the sun. It is impossible for any one to become a believer in Christ, but through some part of revealed truth made known to him.* The *progress* of faith proceeds in the same way from hearing. At first, we are weak in faith, like little children, but the word is as milk to the young, (1 Cor. iii, 1, 2.) and as meat to the strong men, (Heb. v, 14.) by which both are nourished and strengthened. And the *perfecting* of faith is connected also with the ministry of the word. St. Paul shows at some length that ministers are appointed for this end, even the perfecting of the saints. Eph. iv, 11—13. Right hearing of the word nourishes till it perfects faith. It will be found true, in general experience, that in proportion as the whole truths of God are clearly brought before the minds of men by the public ministry of the word, and as they faithfully and constantly attend it, so true Christian faith, with all its blessed effects, will spread and increase.† The

* Alluding to the repentance of the people of Nineveh, Latimer says, "Jonah was but one man, and he preached but one sermon, and it was but a short sermon neither, as touching the number of words, and yet he turned all the whole city, great and small, rich and poor, king and all. We be many preachers here in England, and we preach many long sermons, and yet the people will not repent nor convert. This was the fruit, the effect, and the good, that his sermon did, that all the whole city, at his preaching, converted and amended their evil living, and did penance in sackcloth. And yet here in this sermon of Jonah is no great curiousness, no great clerkliness, no great affection of words, nor of painted eloquence; it was none other but *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed!* It was no more. This was no great curious sermon; but this was a nipping sermon, a pinching sermon, a biting sermon, it had a full bite, it was a rough sermon, and a sharp-biting sermon. Do you not here marvel that these Ninevites cast not Jonah in prison, that they did not revile and rebuke him? They did not revile him, nor rebuke him; but God gave them grace to hear him, and to convert, and amend at this preaching. A strange matter, so noble a city to give place to one man's sermon!" *Sermon on Luke xii*, 15.

* Latimer thus meets the objection made from his admitting that some of our forefathers might be saved without hearing—"But some will say, What need we preachers then? God can save his elect without preachers. A goodly reason! God can save my life without meat and drink, need I none therefore? God can save me from burning if I were in the fire, shall I run into it therefore? No, no; I must keep the way that God hath ordained, and use the ordinary means that God hath assigned, and not seek new ways. This office of preaching is the only ordinary way that God hath appointed to save us all by." *Sermon on Matt. xxii*, 21.

† The Reformers insisted much on this. Cranmer, in his Catechism published in 1548, gives this exhortation—"Forasmuch as faith is the work of God and the light of our hearts, which God putteth in us by his word and Holy Spirit, (so that we cannot attain faith and the knowledge of Christ without God's word and true preachers,) therefore accustom yourselves even from your tender age to hear the word of God, that he by his Holy Spirit may move and stir up your hearts to true faith and knowledge of him." Tindal, also, in his Exposition of 1 John i, 3—1, says, "To bring unto the fellowship of God and Christ, and of them that believe in Christ, is the final intent of all Scrip-

reason is, it is promised that a divine power shall accompany the word—"My word that goeth forth out of my mouth, shall not return unto me void." The word of man, or of angels, has no such power. Certainly, though men by persuasion can produce many important changes of sentiment, no voice or word of men can by its native energy impart divine faith, and regenerate and convert the soul. John i, 12, 13; James i, 18. True Christian faith will not spring or grow under mere human doctrine. *Thus saith the Lord*, is the only foundation for that faith which overcomes the world and gives peace to the troubled conscience. St. Paul restricts the gift of faith in ordinary cases to the hearing of the word, as is evident from the whole passage. Rom. x, 8—17. All systems of ethics, all mere human philosophy, all the wisdom of this world are utterly insufficient. In Jeremiah xxiii, 28, 29, it is asked, with amazing emphasis and force of contrast, "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord: is not my word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" The Holy Scriptures were written for the very purpose of producing faith in those who received them. "These things," says St. John, "are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx, 21.

Hereby *our justification is confirmed.* It is true that we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Rom. iii, 24. But how do I receive the blessing? by faith. What is the warrant of that faith? the word of God. How are we to obtain that faith? by hearing. How is that faith proved to be genuine? by its conforming the soul to the word, and producing corresponding fruits in the life. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." John x, 27. When we hear Christ's voice and follow him, then we may be sure that he knows us, and we are his sheep, and among his justified people. "Whom he called, them he also justified." Rom. viii, 30.

Hereby *our adoption is certified.* God gives to his people the spirit of adoption; the power, the right or privilege, to become the sons of God. John i, 12. This is given to those "that believe on the name of his Son." When Christ is preached, and I hear, and, through the Holy Spirit, accept the offer of mercy in Christ, I become a child of God, and am reckoned in that family of which it is said, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. viii, 14—17. By nature men are the servants of sin and under its tyrannical bondage; but the receiving of the truth breaks the chains and admits them to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Rom. viii. 21. Our Lord says, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii, 32. Who can tell the blessedness of looking up to God with filial confidence and love as our Father? Surely no tongue can express the delightful bliss of seeing the love of a Heavenly Parent in our own paternal feelings, and discovering in our care and tenderness towards our children, day by day, fresh traces and emblems of his parental care, and love, and terderness towards us his children, elevating the heart to him, and filling it with joy and gladness. O what fulness of joy is it to have such a father, so wise, so mighty, so rich and so bountiful, so kind and so tender, so holy and so unspeakably excellent, our reconciled Father in Jesus Christ!

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ture, why it was given of God unto man, and the only thing which all true preachers seek, and whereby ye shall ever know and discern the true word of God from all false and counterfeited doctrine of vain traditions, and the true preacher from the wily hypocrite. We preach unto you, says John, that everlasting life which we have heard, and in hearing received through faith, and are sure of it, to draw you to us out of that fellowship which we have with the damned Devils in sinful lusts and ignorance of God."

Hereby *our election is secured.* We are charged, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Pet. i, 10. By diligently attending the means of grace, we obtain divine strength, enabling us to be holy and to glorify God, and thus have a sweet assurance given that we are chosen in Christ. Eph. i, 4. And what love is here! that God should, from his own good pleasure, before time began, have planned salvation, and purposed, to the glory of his own grace, and the praise of his name, to save us from sin, make us holy, and bring us to his kingdom: I say, this is such a display of divine mercy and love, as, if once reasonably made out from the word of God and the work of his Spirit on the heart, cannot but fill us with love, and gratitude, and assured hope, and the most joyful anticipations of future glory, and deeply humble our souls in the conviction that all we are and have is of sovereign grace and love. Latimer says, "Whosoever heareth the word of God and followeth it, the same is elect by him. And again, whosoever refuseth to hear the word of God and follow the same is damned. So that our election is sure if we follow the word of God."*

Hereby *God carries on our sanctification.* All Christian graces are nourished and strengthened by a due regard to Christ's word. We have seen, that regeneration and faith are thus given, and all holiness is thus advanced in us. Our Lord prays to his Father for his disciples—"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." John xvii, 17. They who are most eminent for holiness, are among those who are at the same time the most constant and diligent in attending to the ministry of the Gospel. Christian reader! we appeal to you, how often has your heart, when dull and lifeless, hereby been stirred up and quickened! How often have holy resolutions been thus first excited in your mind! How certainly all your religion would, humanly speaking, have died, had it not been for the afresh-quickening, and new-reviving power of the Gospel. It is called, and it is found to be "a savour of life unto life." Every sinful disposition and affection is checked and curbed, every holy and heavenly desire and feeling is nourished and strengthened, while we are humbly waiting for divine instruction in the way of God's appointment. The manifestation of the Spirit (whether it be the word of wisdom, or the word of knowledge, or any other gift) is given to every man to profit withal, (1 Cor. xii, 7, 8.) both for himself and for others. Every part of the word is designed for our good; let none, then, of the precious seed be lost.

The scriptural comfort of the believer is maintained and advanced. The Gospel is the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. It is *good tidings of great joy.* The office of ministers is to comfort the people of Christ, as well as to awaken the careless. And O what full and abounding comfort there is to the tried, afflicted, and burdened Christian in the rich promises of a free pardon, a full and gratuitous justification by Christ, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the new covenant "well ordered in all things and sure!" Christian reader! have you never gone to the house of God weary, disquieted, and sorrowful, and there heard a word in season, and returned calm, and peaceful, and happy? Have you never there experienced some of the cheering consolations which flow from the divine love "shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit," and the blessedness and excellence of that *peace of God which passeth all understanding?* This has been the happy experience of the servants of God. David says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." To taste the love of Christ to us, and to feel emotions of strongest love to him, this is heaven begun below. O how the hearts of the hearers of the Lord must have been comforted when he asked the qustion, "Who is my father, and who are my brethren? and he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! And he said unto them, My mother and brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it." The very assurance

* See Latimer's Sermons, vol. ii, p. 425.

that in duly regarding that word we are fulfilling a plain duty, and attending to our highest interest, may well comfort us; and the doctrines of the Gospel truly received are an unfailing spring of happiness.

Our *souls are ripening for the glory to come.* Not merely temporal benefits, but a preparation for eternal, is connected with a due regard to Christ's word. Our Lord asserts, "He that heareth my words, and believeth in me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." This is the road in which the saints that now fill the heavenly mansions once walked on earth. They heard, and listened to, and loved the truth of God. They tasted its sweetness, they experienced its power, they lived under its influence. St. Peter says, "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." 1 Pet. ii, 2. Would you attain the glory above? tread in the steps of saints below, and thus be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Reader! it is true excellence, and the way to true glory, to discern the vanity of all knowledge separate from that which makes wise unto salvation, and to yield and submit ourselves wholly to the guidance of divine truth. Those saved by the Gospel are freely pardoned, justified, and accepted of God, sanctified by his Holy Spirit, and made meet to be partakers of the heavenly inheritance. They are adopted into the family of their divine Parent, made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. To be delivered from the wrath of God, the power of Satan, and the misery of hell; to be changed, renewed, and purified by the Holy Ghost; to be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and even now to have the sure hope of everlasting life—these are some foretastes of future blessings, and the way in which God fits and trains up his children for the family above.

Wherever the Gospel is preached, there, more or less, these blessings are imparted to those who faithfully hear it. But we have hitherto only discoursed of blessings given in this life: let us look forward a little. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. xxii, 14.

What then are the happy results of faithful hearing, as they regard eternal life? Let us look at it only in one point —the *perfect knowledge of God which we shall there attain.* Now, under the clearest discourses of the ministry, and the fullest privileges of the Gospel, "we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." There is a veil of flesh between us and the world of spirits; there is a body of sin and death that intercepts our view, and obscures our prospect, and hinders our full knowledge. True it is, we have the cheering light of God's holy word; (an inestimable advantage) *a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths,* to guide us safe in the way to heaven. Christians are like men travelling along a high road in the night, with a sufficient light in their hands to guide them through to their home; but they can see little or nothing of the beauties and glories of the country through which they pass; the most splendid landscape may be spread before them; the hills, and dales, and rivers, and woods may enrich the scene with diversified beauty; the most curious, and delicate plants and flowers may adorn the whole, and yet the pilgrim be either unconscious of it, or unable to discern it. But, by-and-by, the night will pass away, the morning of the resurrection will come, and then, O then! what tongue can tell the enraptured emotions of the faithful servant of Christ, discovering infinite beauties, where he was ready to think all was gloom and dreariness; magnificence and glory bursting on his ravished sight, beyond all his conceptions! What heart can imagine the blessed result, which will assuredly succeed to our now walking by faith, when the veil is removed, and the glorious light of life shines upon us, and we behold that heavenly country, of which it is said, "there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giv-

eth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever!"

Invisible things are now discovered to us, not as they are in themselves, but by visible things. We see something of the excellence of God in the various titles by which he reveals himself. We hear of him as our Father and our Portion, our Shield and our exceeding great Reward. We are told that Christ is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King; and that we are to view him as the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world, and the Bread of Life. The blessed Spirit is represented to us as a Comforter and Sanctifier, as Purifying Fire, and Refreshing and Living Water. Through these figures, some faint but most important ideas of the ever-glorious Jehovah are conveyed to our understanding. Spiritual things are thus discerned by us, through the emblem of natural things; they are now only objects of faith, and are therefore seen afar off and obscurely. O how infinitely superior then will be that knowledge of which it is now said, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"—we "shall know even as also we are known."

Now God is training up his children in the school of this world, for their heavenly and enduring state. The man of the deepest wisdom, and of the most enlarged intellect, must say, (as Solomon did) while here, "I am but a little child" —I speak as a child—I understand as a child—I think as a child. But our manhood will *then* have come. We shall cease from human tuition. We shall rest in God. O how cheering is the thought that multitudes of names that now divide the Church, and are made leaders of opposite parties, will, it may be well hoped, spend a blessed eternity together, every distinction lost in magnifying but one name—*God, our Saviour.* All those knotty and difficult questions which now distract the Church, will then be fully and forever answered. It will no more be difficult to reconcile the grace of God and the freedom of men; the sincere invitations of his word, and the final destruction of the wicked; his foreknowledge of their ruin, and that ruin wholly brought on them by their own fault. It will then be distinctly and clearly seen that God was, in all his dealings, infinitely and supremely full of wisdom, truth, and holiness; altogether just, of unbounded mercy, and unparalleled love; in short, righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Then shall we see *face to face.* Hence we shall have a clear, familiar, and intimate knowledge of God, making as great a difference as the knowledge which we have of a person only by report, and that which we have of him by personally seeing him and conversing with him from day to day. Only there will be this delightful difference. We cannot become intimately acquainted with the best of human beings, without discovering something of remaining corruption; but the more we see and fully know our God, the more we shall discover unexpected and perfect excellence, without one defect or blemish. Now, "no man can see his face and live." Exod. xxiii, 10. "We see through a glass, darkly," with much obscurity. We know God by faith, we see him in emblems and figures. Hereafter the dim mirror will be no longer needed, for we shall see, and know, and enjoy God in a higher way than now we can imagine, for "we shall know even as we are known." Not that the creature can know the Creator to the same extent as the Creator knows him; but in the same mode of knowledge, and as intimately, sensibly, and perceptibly as now we know our fellow-ceatures.

O cheering thought! "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John xvii, 3. Then his perfections and divine glory will all be clearly illustrated and fully displayed. It was the prayer of Moses, "Show me thy glory!" and, though he could not while in the flesh behold it, yet God made his goodness to pass before him; and, hid in the cleft of the rock, he saw the back parts of Jehovah, even his glorious character in forgiving sin, and yet retaining perfect justice. Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7. What Moses, on the mount and hid in the rock, could only partially see, we shall in

heaven ever behold. The wonderful harmony and surpassing excellence of the divine perfections will then be fully revealed. There his providences will all be solved. He told Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." John xiii, 7. Infinite goodness and truth will be seen in all those dispensations that are now difficult and gloomy: why one lost a dear and only child, another the wife of his bosom when most needed for his family, another was disappointed of his most cherished hope, another was removed from a scene of great usefulness, a pious minister cut off, the candlestick removed from churches, and the wicked for a season triumphant. The tenderest mercy, and the most inviolable faithfulness, will be discerned in the heaviest trials and sorrows, even as the brightest rainbow may sometimes be seen on the darkest cloud. The wisdom of God in all his doings will be fully established and justified, and universally acknowledged. Now the wicked cast many a reproach against their Maker, and he forbears to execute judgment, and his servants often cannot discern his ways. We cannot tell all the reasons for which evil is permitted and the wicked prosper; though in his word we see enough to lead every believer to rest with fullest confidence in the goodness and righteousness of God. But then there will be an infinitely higher knowledge. The beautful language of Isaiah will all be realized—"The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

O happy day! O happy people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance! O happy result of faithful hearing! Christian reader! let us seek this happiness, as the one great object of our worthy and incessant pursuit.

Are you desirous of this happiness, and yet utterly uncertain and doubtful about your interest in it? Have you examined yourself, and still are unable to discover what is your character? or, rather, fearful, that you are among the unfaithful hearers of the word? Well, suppose it to be so, as with vast multitudes it is so; what is your present duty, and your first interest? Fly on the wings of faith to the Saviour. Exercise present acts of faith in him. Regard his great, and full, and free salvation. Cast yourself, guilty and vile as you truly judge yourself to be, on his ample merits; and it may be in the very exercise of faith you may discover, not only that he that believeth shall be saved, but, that you do really believe, and are among the saved. You may receive from that blessed Saviour, the large gift of the Holy Ghost, and so may be filled with love, and joy, and peace, and break through all the trammels of sin and Satan, and triumph over the world, and live here to the praise and glory of God, and the good of man, and finally join the spirits of just men made perfect above, to inherit with them the full enjoyment of their praises, and their participations of divine glory through eternity.

CHAPTER XV.

Address to different Classes, exhorting them to attend to this Duty.

Though the danger of neglecting the word be so great, and the blessed result of attending to it so unspeakably important, yet, as we have already intimated, it is an appalling fact, that the great mass of professing Christians in a Christian land do neglect to hear, or hear very irregularly. We would close then this Treatise, by earnestly beseeching all such persons, of whatever condition, or in whatever class of life they may be, to lay to heart the duty which it is the design of this Treatise to recommend and enforce.

Are you *in eminent and leading situations*—Rulers and Governors, Statesmen and Legislators, Barristers and Phy-

sicians, whose employment is of such magnitude, and whose avocations are so numerous, and engagements so unremitting, that it appears to you that there is a reasonable excuse for your absence? of all other classes, the load of responsibility falls heaviest on you. You stand upon an elevation so commanding, your influence is so extensive, and your personal piety so indispensable, that, without it, all your means and power, instead of a comprehensive benefit, may become a wide-wasting mischief. You are equally dependent with the poorest and meanest of your fellow-creatures, as to your everlasting salvation, on the use of the means which God has appointed. You are bound by the very knowledge which exalts you above others, to be aware of this. You will be under an aggravated condemnation, if, professing yourselves to be wise, you act the part of the greatest folly, and misuse all the distinguished talents with which you are intrusted. Your situation gives you peculiar advantages for attaining and diffusing heavenly wisdom. How tremendous your responsibility if you use these advantages for increasing and extending that wisdom which is earthly, sensual, and devilish! Do you speak of the impossibility of sparing time? You only show your earthly mind. It is impossible, only because of the superior importance which you attach to earthly things.* The time taken from religion is not saved: the time given to it is not lost. How many instances occur of men in high stations so overwhelming themselves with work, and so neglectful of hearing the word, and misemploying the sabbath, and thence so destitute of the comfort of that word, that in an hour of depression, despondency prevails, and they destroy themselves! Such instances are beacons to all in every station, not to violate God's appointed ordinances, however occupied, even if the violation had only an injurious influence on the present life. The Christian will feel far higher motives. and such men as Sir Matthew Hale, and the late Mr. Hey of Leeds, show how it is possible, even amid other multifarious and important engagements, to find time for hearing the word. In fact, there have been men faithfully discharging the duties of religion in all those precise situations of lawful employment which worldly men allege as a sufficient excuse for neglect.

Are you *in extensive business*, in the midst of large mercantile transactions, and extending your schemes and plans on every side, either at home or abroad? O, without the divine blessing, what good will you derive from worldly prosperity? You may roll in wealth; but even now your wills are perpetually crossed, and care and anxiety rob you of repose; disease will soon follow—death is at hand—and what will be the end, when your soul shall be required of you? Do you ask, What shall I do? moderate your earthly desires; restrain your ambitious projects; attend to something higher, and more really profitable—your spiritual, your eternal good; make it your main concern to "fear God and keep his commandments;" here is your first business and true bliss. Do you call this folly and enthusiasm? Hearken, men of mere business! you are enthusiasts! you are extravagant; you are imprudent; your schemes are trifling; your speculations fanciful and delusive! No, you reply; we lay our plans wisely and cautiously; we have long experience; they are sure to succeed. Be it so. Let them succeed, still the charge is true: your great business is overlooked; your chief interest is neglected; your main chance is still in hazard: you are wise for a day, but are you not fools for endless days? you gain a child's rattle, you lose an an-

* Cecil's remarks, in his sermon on Jer. xxiii, 28, 29, on men's preferring their own notions and dreams to simple evangelical truth, are striking—"It pleases God to appoint the preaching of the Gospel in a neighbourhood; that is, he opens a spring of life in a dry and barren place. But one man cannot attend, though he lives in the neighbourhood, and why? he leans to his imaginations: he has dreamed! he is a Socinian, and cannot bear the doctrines taught in the Church of England. Another is a philosopher truly! he has turned his thoughts to the reason and fitness of things, and cannot attend to the plain and simple preaching of God's word, which calls him to lay down all imaginations and reasonings, and be taught by his great parent what is that religion which is acceptable to himself."

gel's inheritance; you escape far enough from an earthly bankruptcy; you are plunging headlong to a bankruptcy which will ruin you for ever. Do I exceed? no, the figures fall short, infinitely short, of the tremendous reality. Listen, O listen to the infallible word of God—"Heaven and earth shall pass away; but that word shall not pass away!"

Are you *parents*? And will you neglect this word? will you set your children a pattern of disobedience to the best of Parents, our Heavenly Father? How can you ask them to obey you, when you wilfully disobey Him! You wish for the good of your children; you desire to make them happy, and possibly, in order to promote this, you spend the sabbath in idle parties of pleasure and vain amusements. What are your feelings at the close of such a sabbath? After a day so spent, are you not wearied, disappointed, burdened, and dissatisfied? So far from being refreshed for the duties of another week, you are unfitted for them. There is infinitely more vexation in mis-spending the sabbath, than in any apparent mortification of our carnal pleasures by following its due and holy employment. Give the day to its sacred duties; bring your children to hear his ministers;* and especially let the word of Christ this day reign in your heart and family, and it will spread a heavenly influence around you; you will be invigorated and quickened for all your daily toil and labours. The word of God, wherever it is received and obeyed, spreads life and fertility, joy and happiness.

Are you *children?* begin early to love and reverence the word of God. Be attentive to what is said by his ministers. Try at least to remember the text of the sermon which you hear. Ask your parents to explain what you do not understand. Think of young Samuel; while he was a *a little child*, he *ministered unto* the Lord, when *the word of the Lord was precious.* He watched *in the temple of the Lord*, and God called him to be a prophet, and used him as an instrument of extensive good. My little children love to hear like Samuel, who said, when God called him, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Young as you are, you should consider yourself a servant of God, you should hear what he speaks, and hear in order to obey. Think of the children who sang Hosannas in the Temple; and of Jesus himself, who at twelve years of age was found in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing and asking them questions. Pray you for God's blessing, as that child did of whom it is said that she never entered the house of God without secretly offering up this petition, "Lord, help me to remember something." The way in which the young become strong and overcome the wicked one, is by having the word of God abide in them. 1 John ii, 14.

Are you *in inferior situations*—Clerks, apprentices, or engaged in manufactories in large cities or towns, or in laborious situations, where you are confined during the week to a close and constant employment? possibly you think yourselves at liberty to neglect hearing on the Sunday, and to spend it in walks and recreation. We allow that the inducements to the carnal mind are very strong, when, to adopt words used on another occasion, "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come," to neglect the less agreeable privilege of hearing the sacred word; and to pursue, without restraint, the delightful recreation afforded to one who has been shut up all the week by the view of the simple scenery of nature, and the refreshing breezes of a pure air. Probably the necessities of your family allow you no other day for such an enjoyment. Probably your earthly master would not, or could not, allow you time for such a refreshment. You think it right to obey him, lest your temporal interests should suffer. But—

* In a sermon on Luke ii, 42, as to Joseph and Mary's taking Jesus at twelve years old to the temple, Latimer commends Mary for going, as the law did not oblige her, and thinks she went to hear the word of God. He adds, "Note the painfulness of Mary, that she was content to go so great a journey for God's sake. I fear this journey of her's will condemn a great many of us which will not go out of door to hear God's word."

would you think it an act of extreme folly, and call it a wasteful idleness to be wandering among the fields when your earthly master, or your family call you to work, and have you not a heavenly master, and have you not spiritual necessities? God has issued his command —*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy!* Will you disregard it? God gives his wages: will you undervalue them? "If thou turn away thy foot from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." Christians! there are much higher joys, even in this world, than contemplating the beauties of nature! O, to have our sins washed away in the blood of Christ, and to be justified freely by his grace, to be renewed by his Holy Spirit, and to become a child of God, this is true happiness on earth! And there are before you, yet higher joys still in the paradise above, "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." May the blessed Spirit of Christ give us a taste for these; let us not forfeit these for any mere temporal indulgences. Our life is now a life of faith, and not of sense; be not surprised therefore if you have to give up some temporal pleasures; those which are innocent shall be enjoyed with a double relish. In any case the time is hastening on when we shall *enter the joy of* our *Lord*, even *fulness of joy*.

But will you still say—Surely we may have Sunday for a day of pleasure. By all means let Sunday be a day of pleasure: but what is your pleasure? Is it idle conversation, feasting, and light and vain company? O these are not real pleasures; they are very unsatisfactory and transitory gleams of false pleasure. 'Delight thyself in the Lord," there is the true happiness of the immortal spirit. Hear and read his word—that tells the labourer of satisfying joy, "of the rest which remaineth for the people of God;" there you have set before you that which will afford you comfort and happiness in all your toils and sorrows. It is specially needful that you should hear, and thus learn divine truth when you can, for you have not time, nor opportunity, for much study, and deep learning; and therefore you should avail yourself of those advantages with which you are now favoured. In a Christian country you have, through a kind providence, ministers appointed to instruct you, whose special office it is to acquire divine knowledge for your edification. In hearing a faithful and wise preacher, you have, in the short time of the delivery of a sermon, the result of much study and prayer applied to your particular necessities. By due attention to such sermons, joined to your own reading of God's word, you will increase in "the knowledge of the Son of God, till you come to a perfect man, unto a measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Be not, by neglect of such instruction, unhappy in both worlds. Hear, believe, and obey; and so shall you be blessed here and for ever. Do you say that you are ashamed to appear for want of clothes fit to come in? but are you not ashamed of being away, when the eye of God marks you in your absence? Do you say there is no room? I reply, Many of our churches are not ordinarily so filled as they might be! Be in good time, and you will find room. More churches would be built, if those that are erected were more crowded.

Are you *servants?* you should not neglect to hear. Shut not yourselves out from so great a privilege, where you have permission to attend, and remain not in any family where you are excluded from hearing God's word. You have souls as precious as those of the highest monarch. You must be happy or miserable, and that for ever. Neglect not the grand ordinance of God for your eternal salvation. The truths which you hear, received in a believing heart, will sweeten the bitterest service, will smooth the most rugged path, and infinitely heighten the comfort of the happiest condition. How blessed is the portion of one, whom no outward circumstances can separate from the Father's love, the Saviour's redemption, the Holy Spirit's

guidance, and the sure prospect of an eternal glory yet to be revealed and fully enjoyed.

To every human being we say—neglect to hear, and you fall under the sentence of destruction: (Acts iii, 23,) *hear, and your souls shall live.* Isa. lv. We set before you life and death: choose you this day. Be wise for eternity. As far as you are concerned, let it no longer be the reproach of Christians that three fourths of those called by the name of Christ, despise his word. Slight not your greatest interest. Believe in God As He cannot deceive, so he will not be mocked. He invites now; but despised, he will arise to judge and condemn. O neglect not so great salvation.

We conclude with the words of our Lord,

HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR:

AND

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND KEEP IT.

THE CHIEF CONCERNS OF MAN FOR TIME AND ETERNITY.

SERMON I.

THE DAY OF GRACE.

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the the grace of God in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.—2 *Cor. vi*, 1, 2.

The peculiarly important relation which has so long subsisted between us as minister and people, being likely, in God's providence, soon to cease, I have anxiously considered what are the subjects to which I might most profitably direct your attention in that limited period during which we are likely to continue together.

It has appeared to me that I could not use so interesting a season more advantageously than by bringing before you those all-important topics—the day of grace, death, the resurrection, judgment, eternity, hell and heaven; which fix our state for ever, and finally closing earthly relations, in their immense magnitude swallow up all inferior concerns:—topics confessedly of supreme importance, and calculated in their very nature to engage our most wakeful attention, and bearing most directly upon every man's liveliest hopes and fears.

In the review of these things may we all be deeply affected with the awful truth, that on this momentary life hangs an eternity pregnant with consequences of the most stupendous interest. This is the great principle brought before you in the text: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain: for he said, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

The subject then of our present consideration is, *The Day of Grace.* The grace of God is now to be obtained, and the present day is the season for obtaining it. If we reject that grace, we perish for ever; if we receive it, we are everlastingly saved.

We will consider,

1. The grace of God,
2. The season of grace,
3. The giving of grace,
4. The receiving of it in vain,
5. The receiving it effectually.

1. The Grace of God.

The grace here meant is free unmerited favor to sinners, proceeding from the sole love of God our Father, and manifesting itself according to their varied wants and necessities.

We will notice, 1. The grace itself; and, 2. The channel through which it flows.

1. *The grace itself.*

The Apostle has just given a full description of this grace. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed

unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." We have here a clear and full revelation of gospel grace, of God's good will to us, the good tidings of great joy to perishing sinners.

Man was created upright, but, being tempted by the devil, he rebelled against his Creator and Benefactor; and, if rich grace had not interposed, he would justly have perished for ever. But, O the riches of that unspeakable love, which, in pity to fallen sinners, provided a remedy!

From the beginning to the end, the gospel unfolds a system of grace. The whole plan of salvation originated in the divine purpose, before the world was made. "He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." 2 Tim. i, 9. And as it originated in grace, so all the preliminary steps of it have been gratuitous. The promises to Adam, on his fall, and to the patriarchs; the types and shadows in the Law of Moses; the exhibitions of it in the prophetical writings, until its full manifestation "in the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light,"—not one step was advanced through man's wisdom or goodness; but all proceed from the overflowing fountain of divine love. God is therefore altogether sovereign in the disposal of grace, saying, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

The blessings of this glorious "Gospel of the grace of God," are also equally free and gracious. Spiritual life and conversion to God are the first that a sinner dead in sin requires. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)" Ephes. ii, 4, 5. Then he wants free and full forgiveness. This is also of grace; "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Ephes. i, 7. To be accounted righteous, as well as forgiven, is further indispensable; the same grace justifies; "Being justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. i, 24. "Holiness also, without which no man shall see the Lord," is absolutely requisite, as without this, we should be miserable even in heaven itself. It is "the grace of God which bringeth salvation, that teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and goodly, in this present world." Titus ii, 11, 12. Nor is there any thing pertaining to our present and everlasting good, which is not freely provided and made over to God's people in Christ Jesus. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. iii, 22, 23. And while it is made over to them, they are themselves guarded and secured from ever losing it. The glorious inheritance above is "reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

Now then, my brethren, we proclaim these blessings, and, in the very language of the divine record, invite you to partake of them. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

But do you say I have forfeited every claim by many sins—Consider farther then.

2. *The Channel through which it flows.*

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." There is a Mediator for sinners. The treasury of grace is in Christ. All its fulness dwells in him, and is to be received from him. The gracious declaration of our text was originally made to the Head of this Church. "Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee,

and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." Isa. xlix, 8.

The gift of Christ was the chief expression of the Father's love to man. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv, 9, 10. And by that gift he encourages us most surely to expect every other. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii, 32.

And not only by the gift of Christ has he assured us of his love, our text leads us to remark that he has also made Christ himself an example and the model of his grace to man. The promise, I have heard thee, was originally made to the Messiah. Whatever was done for the help of our Divine Head, shall, in a subordinate sense, be done for his people, to carry them through all impediments, "till he bring forth judgment to victory." The promises made to him, in the first instance, belong, as far as they are needful for salvation, to all his disciples. The help which he received is a picture of the help which those who believe in him shall receive through him. Moreover, he is also the Dispenser of all God's grace to sinners. Absent from us, as to his personal presence, yet, though "ascended up on high, he has received gifts, yea, even for the rebellious;" and as a Prince and Saviour, he sheds forth those gifts, according to the necessities of his Church and people. "The God of all grace hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus," (1 Pet. v, 10,) and every blessing in the way thither is received through him.

O with what confidence and assurance of success may you come to the throne of grace! One sits there who loved his enemies; one sits there who lived and died for sinners, and "makes intercession for the transgressors, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." If you ask why sinners receive blessings, and why God bears with the perverseness of his people, and still showers down his loving kindnesses on them day by day? I reply, because he delights to gratify the sinner's Saviour—his own, his only, his beloved Son, in whom he is always well pleased. It is not for your sake, but because you are purchased by the blood of Jesus, and belong to him; therefore, does the Father heap mercies on the unworthy.

Here then, you see what a provision of grace there is in the Gospel—How full and how complete! O that it may not be set before you in vain!—but that each heart may offer up the prayer, Remember me, O Lord, with this favour; Visit me, even me, with thy salvation, O Lord. To animate and rouse you to fervour in the use of such petitions, consider,

2. THE SEASON OF GRACE.

"He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!"

In reference to this season of grace, observe, 1. The deplorable want of it; 2. The invaluable possession; and 3. The attention which it demands.

1. *The deplorable want of it.*

There are those who have lost the divine grace, and all hope of recovering it.

The fallen angels once basked in the sunshine of divine love and favour. Their first state was beautiful and glorious. By pride they fell. They "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." Jude 6. No grace was manifested as far as is revealed to us, planning their recovery; no season for their restoration. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Heb. ii, 16. They were to be the monuments for ever of the extent of the divine power, the dreadfulness of his wrath, and severity of his justice. O the strictness of that justice, which left those wicked spirits in all the misery of their fall; no way of escape devised for them! No appointed season of grace.

The lost souls in hell, once had a day of grace. On earth, like us, they were probationers for heaven. They had life,

and health, and strength. They had power of mind, and affections of heart, and the conscience of right and wrong. They knew that they were mortal, yet destined for immortality. The volume of nature was opened to all, and to many the volume of grace. But loving darkness rather than light, the precious seasons of grace were frittered away and finally lost for ever.

O methinks, could we to these lost souls proclaim another day of grace, another season of opportunity and escape: one more space of trial: from every imprisoned spirit in hell, would break forth the earnest supplications, "Oh, try us, yet this once,—once again, try us: we will no more slight the offered mercy, no more neglect the great salvation; no more make an earthly world our home, no more be drunk with the riches and pleasures, the cares and business of a transitory state. O! we shall think all the yoke of Christ easy, his burden light indeed! Try us again, Oh try us yet this once."

But every rising expectation there is crushed with—"Remember, thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things." Thou hast deliberately preferred the world and its good things to God, and his favour, and now it is too late. "Thy harvest is past, thy summer is ended,"—never, never to return.

Even in this world, I must not conceal the awful truth, men may forfeit the advantage of a day of grace. Just as "Esau who for one morsel of meat sold his birth right. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii, 16, 17. The sinner may harden his own heart, till God leaves him to his own hardness, withdrawing from him his Holy Spirit, giving him up to his own heart's lusts, and to walk in his own counsels. Ps. lxxxi, 12.

O sinner, harden not thine heart, lest this which is written come upon thee, lest conscience should lose all its sensibility, and thy day of grace be prematurely closed.

But in every case death approaches, and that dark night inevitably closes and terminates, to all, the day of grace.

2. *The invaluable possession of the day of grace.*

The text assumes the present possession of the day of grace, when it says, "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

It is the acceptable time—the time of good will, or acceptance. There is a proclamation of pardon to rebels, and the day yet continues for accepting it—there is salvation from eternal ruin and to eternal glory, and to-day this salvation may be obtained.

To the Jews, the time of Christ's ministry was this day; but they rejected him, and he wept over them, and said, "O that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke xix, 42. They let the day pass. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

When the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians, the day of grace was extended to the Gentile world; multitudes embraced the Gospel, households, towns, cities, countries, and empires, gradually professed Christianity. The Gospel was widely proclaimed; there was a large outpouring of the Spirit, and all the glory of the primitive church.

But brethren, I turn from others, to proclaim in your ears that there is *now* for you an accepted time, and the present is *now* for you a day of salvation. Observe the remarkable repetition of *now*. We have a similar repetition of the word, *To-day*, in Hebrews, iv, 7. "He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time as it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

The present time is the only season of which you are sure. Now in this life is the only time you have; the present life is a short reprieve for sinful creatures, a respite from the execution of the sentence upon them, in which they may seek, and obtain deliverance from eternal death, and the blessing of everlasting life. St. Paul does not speak in the future; there is no future day of salvation: no return to earth again. If you ever

repent, it must be now; if you ever believe in Christ, it must be now; if ever you are converted, and pray, and work out your own salvation, and escape hell, and win heaven, it must be now. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." Matt. v, 25, 26. O my friends, there is no doing the work of salvation in another world. Heaven and hell have other employments: one to enjoy for ever the completed salvation, and the other for ever to bewail its loss. Now then, whatever may become of your reputation, of your estate, of your liberty, of your family, of your life itself, neglect not the one thing needful, your salvation.

Are you in youth—O my children, O my young friends, think not you are secure beyond a day, even the present day; the Saviour says, "They that seek me early shall find me."

Are you in middle life, and have health and strength; give all to him who is worthy of all; health and strength are no protection against sickness and death; this may be to you also the only day of salvation.

Are you aged—the day of salvation still remains, it is rapidly departing, grasp hold of Christ ere it be gone for ever.

An affecting incident occurred in our own congregation, which may to our minds give a reality to all the things of which we have been speaking. A most regular attendant on my ministry, who never missed when he could help it, was at church on the Sunday, and on the Wednesday in his business; but feeling unwell, he sent for a medical man, who seemed to think with proper care he might live for many years. He took his tea the same evening, and had hardly swallowed it, before he fell back dead. I see him as sitting on that seat before me, where he so regularly attended. He heard the sermons which you have heard; he joined in the prayers you have joined; and now he is gone to the reality of what we have so often spoken of,—and soon you and I must follow. But his death tells us with a powerful voice, *now is the day of salvation!*

3. *The attention which it demands. Behold! Behold!*

It is twice repeated because men neglect it so much,—because it is so infinitely important to regard it.

There are many things which ask for our attention, that are not worthy of our thoughts; there are other things valuable in their proportion; but this is supremely and incalculably important. It is nothing less than escaping the greatest of all evils—an evil beyond our highest thoughts ruinous, and attaining the greatest possible good, a good beyond our highest thoughts advantageous. O if ever attention were needful, it is needful here! "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

Behold it so then, as to turn your eyes from all other objects that would distract and hinder your attention to this your happy season of grace. Let the Saviour have to say of you, "But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her."

Consider much this rich grace of God; search the Scriptures, that you may see it in all its fulness. Believe firmly all that God says concerning it, and use heartily and gladly, all its treasures for your soul's salvation.

Have any hitherto neglected this great salvation? let me exhort them, with all possible earnestness and affection, to neglect it no longer. Now you have life, the word of God, Sabbaths, sermons, ministers, pious friends, the means of grace, every possible help. You have time to seek God; he is waiting to be gracious, it is a golden opportunity, all things are ready. Never, never will you have a better time, a fitter time, or one more favourable than now, and possibly you may have no other; never again may the same invitation reach your ears: never again the Spirit soften your heart. O then "to-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!" O to-day receive the grace of God!

But have any known the accepted time, and God working in them; are they "working out their own salvation with fear and trembling?"—Press onward, beloved brethren, for the prize; "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." You may have to go through many trials; but all are ordered and regulated for your best good, and whatever they may be in the midst of them, God will hear and succour you. You shall find the faithfulness of the declaration,—"I have heard thee, and I have succoured thee." He will keep you so that "none shall pluck you out of his hands."

SERMON II.

THE DAY OF GRACE.

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee. Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.—2 *Cor. vi,* 1, 2.

From these words I stated my purpose to consider, 1. The grace God. 2. The season of grace. 3. The giving of grace. 4. The receiving it in vain. 5. The receiving it effectually. We have already considered the first two divisions.

There remain to consider,

3. The giving of grace,
4. The receiving of grace in vain,
5. The receiving this grace effectually.

3. THE GIVING OF GRACE.

We then, as workers together with him.

We have here the instrument used, and the power using it.

The instrument used—is the ministry of the Gospel. God uses, in infinite condescension, sinful men to be the heralds of his grace, and to convey to their fellow sinners the tidings of his love. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." This is our proper business, this our high office as God's ministers. In this accepted time we study in hope, we pray in hope, we preach in hope, we labour in hope, if that God by any means, through us, may save your souls. Nor have we any thing that ought so to lie upon our minds as this. How the Apostle speaks to the Galatians, "my little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you." We know that the time of opportunity is limited and short; we urge upon your attention the only way of salvation; we remind you that the continuance of the day of grace is full of all uncertainties; we declare the aggravated guilt of neglecting it, and that, if the Gospel be not "a savour of life unto life, it is a savour of death unto death;" we desire "to be instant in season and out of season," never resting till we see you safe in the only refuge for sinners,—the grace of God.

We remember also that a day will come when we can no more think of you, and pray for you, visit you, and beseech you to turn to Christ: A day when ministers will be withdrawn from you for ever, and if you have received the grace of God in vain, Satan may give your minister a challenge which he can then neither accept nor answer.—"Do what thou will to rescue this or that lost sinner from my grasp; to bring him to repentance and salvation. He is mine, for ever chained in indissoluble bonds, my prey, my lawful captive—yes, for ever."

Let the voice of the ministry now then reach your ears: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found."

And for your encouragement, remember

The power using the instrument.

Do not think we magnify the instrument. The treasure is unspeakably excellent and precious, but "we have this treasure in earthen vessels"—vessels of no value in themselves, full of defects and weaknesses, soon broken and laid aside—and why is this? "that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." 2 Cor. iv, 7.

A divine power atttends the feeble ministry of man. To them that are saved "the preaching of the cross is the wisdom of God and the power of God."

Preaching is the divine ordinance in which God is wont to pour out his Holy Spirit. O if you had right views of this ordinance how highly would you esteem —how diligently attend the ministry of the Gospel, looking for and expecting the Holy Ghost. This, this is our aim —not that our preaching may be "with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:" that as our sufficiency is of God, so that sufficiency may be continually seen in turning you from sin, and building you up in your most holy faith. It is his promise "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" O that the power may be put forth even in our ministry, to the conversion and salvation of your precious souls.

The measure given, is just as it pleases God; to some more, to some less: "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Just as the gifts of the Spirit are bestoweth on each according to the Divine sovereignty, and "all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will;" so the graces of the Spirit are according to the gift, freely given of God—"ask and ye shall have." Be not content with a small measure of grace. O how little, how very little most of us have, and how satisfied we are with that little, instead of hungering and thirsting for more and more, that grace and peace may be multiplied, we sit down contented with the truth of grace, when we ought to long for the riches and fulness of grace. Let us apply to him who "giveth liberally and upbraideth not.

4. THE RECEIVING THIS GRACE IN VAIN.

The Apostle exhorts the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. This implies that many hear of, yet never benefit by this grace.

Mark then, 1. the persons who receive this grace in vain; and 2. their inexcusableness.

1. *The persons who receive this grace in vain.*

There are various and very opposite classes, who, however they may differ in other respects, agree in this, they all receive the grace of God in vain. *Unbelievers* prefer darkness to light "because their deeds are evil." Thus the Jews at Antioch when they saw the Gentiles crowding to hear the word "they were filled with envy and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." Acts xiii, 44. So again in Iconium, "the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." Acts xiv, 2. The Apostle says, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness. 1 Cor. i, 23. The root of this unbelief is the love of sin, and it is the love of sin therefore which you must especially watch and pray against. "O take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Heb. iii, 12.

Self-righteous persons think so well of themselves that they do not see their need of this grace; it may be very proper and suitable they suppose for the wicked, but their goodness will help them, and so they reject the grace that brings salvation—"Going about," the most impracticable of all attempts that sinful man ever made, "to establish their own righteousness, they submit not themselves to the righteousness of God."

Careless persons also receive the grace of God in vain. They are like the wayside hearer; the truth comes before them, but it sinks not into the heart: and, as Gallio, they "care for none of these things;" if their temporal interests were affected, they would be all alive, but as it only concerns the soul, they are inattentive, and indifferent, and unconcerned.

There are others who may be called *temporary believers;* in them the seed of the word is sown as on a rock, for a while they believe, but in time of temptation they fall away. There may be great joy and excitement for a season, but it is soon lost, and they become less impressible than ever. *Worldly men* in general receive the grace of God in vain; "The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other

things, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." There are others who are great talkers in religion, they can speak most fluently on religious subjects, speculate about them, dispute for them, and admire them, "they say but do not;" these also receive the grace of God in vain. There are some even who pervert the doctrines of grace, and make them an occasion of sin; and "turn the grace of God into licentiousness."

O my brethren, I cannot but fear that there are now before me persons who under one or other of these descriptions are trifling with or trampling upon the grace of God. Search and try your ways; pray earnestly to God in the words of David, "Examine and prove me, O Lord, look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." For consider,

4. *The inexcusableness of those who reject this grace.*

It is a case of most fearful guilt and danger. Every moment's delay increases the danger, as it shortens the time between them and ruin. If they are spared year after year, through the intercession of the Lord Jesus, yet while they cumber the ground, the last year will soon come, and with it an accumulated load of guilt. Solomon thus describes their state: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when destruction and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Prov. i, 24—28. Here too is an alarming aggravation of their misery; they had a day of grace, the proclamation of mercy sounded in their ears; but they rejected all, till there was no remedy. Our Lord assures us that "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment" than for those who heard and disregarded his Gospel. They shall be left without excuse, and as the man who had not on the wedding garment was speechless, so they shall be without one plea, when they are bound hand and foot, and "cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Despise not then the riches of the goodness and loving kindness of God: wait on him with all earnestness for a part and share in his salvation, and rest not till this great stake be secure.

Do you ask how you may receive the grace of God effectually, and what is the character of those who do so? we proceed to consider,

5. THE RECEIVING OF THIS GRACE EFFECTUALLY.

The Apostle beseeches them not to receive the grace of God in vain, that is, to receive it effectually, in the season in which it is brought before us.

That we may have a better view of this, we will notice some seasons of receiving grace which you should watch for and improve.

Sabbaths in general are God's seasons. What a mercy it is to have one day entirely set apart for attending to the concerns of our souls. Now "if thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and shalt call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah lviii, 13, 14. Duly observe the Sabbath, diligently seek God's grace on his own day, and in his appointed ordinances, and you shall not fail to receive it. O neglect not the sermons which you hear on the Sabbath. When the Gospel of Christ is faithfully preached, sermons are special seasons of grace. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" yes, all the rich blessings of the Gospel are dispensed from Christ in the ministry of his own appointment, and Christians find this. A sermon either makes your heart more hardened by be-

ing disregarded, or more softened by being improved. Receive grace then on God's Sabbath.

Afflictions again are seasons of grace. Whether it be sickness in your own person, or in your family and relatives, or losses and trials, or distresses, "afflictions spring not from the dust," nor does the Lord afflict willingly, for his own pleasure, but "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Heb. xii, 10. So that all God's servants can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Ps. cxix, 67, 72. O then let not the season of affliction pass away without accomplishing God's gracious design of love to your soul. Receive grace in this season of grace.

Times of conviction are also seasons of grace. There are periods in a man's life when he feels, "I am a sinful creature, I am in danger of God's wrath, I must alter my conduct, I must begin anew." Now if while these convictions are lively, he does not quench and resist them, but strives "according to his working who worketh in us mightily," to increase and deepen them, then shall he receive larger and fuller communications of the Holy Spirit; but if yielding to sin and Satan, he trifles with conviction, and stifles and drowns it by rushing into worldly society, and plunging into the cares and distractions of a sinful world, a season of grace is lost, and the soul becomes more insensible, more unimpressible than before.

But I need not enlarge, since every event, every circumstance of life is to the Christian a season of grace. Just as in the cultivation of a garden, sometimes the gardener digs the ground, sometimes he prunes the trees, sometimes he sows the seed, sometimes he plucks up the weeds, but all is to make the garden beautiful and fruitful: so our God in varied ways deals with our souls, that grace may flourish in us and bring forth fruit to his glory and our everlasting salvation.

Besides these particular directions, there are also some general principles not to be lost sight of by those who would effectually receive the grace of God or ascertain how far that grace effectually works in themselves.

Need I mention *faith* and *prayer* as indispensable for the receiving and growth of grace?

Faith must be first exercised. This credits the existence and promise of grace—believes all that God says about it—is "fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform," and takes them simply at his word, assured that he would neither mock nor deceive us. Faith therefore welcomes, as infallibly true, the declaration of the way of recovery for lost sinners in the Gospel, assures herself that God is merciful to man, and that forgiveness, justification, adoption, sanctification, the hope of glory, and eternal life, are placed within her grasp: joyful news, what good tidings of great joy! I see a way of escape; I see the doors of the kingdom of heaven fly opey to all believers. I see a reconciled Father, I see a sufficient and complete Saviour, I see a guide and comforter, I see the strait gate, and the narrow way, and, by the grace of God, I will strive to enter in. May you all obtain this precious gift of faith, it will be like another sense to you, far more blessed than hearing or seeing, enabling you to discern the realities and glories which most of all concern you as immortal beings. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance: in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

Prayer is the cry of faith; the way in which grace is obtained and increased, and it is founded on our sense of need. Encouraged by the assurance that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, and that he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we gladly avail ourselves of the gracious invitations, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Not boldly only, but earnestly,—you must strive hard in prayer: cold petitions will not do. David says, "my soul followeth *hard* after

God; that word *hard* is significant and instructive. As the drowning man would cry for help, as Peter cried, "Lord save or I perish," so must we cry for grace. O be assured a careless prayer and a heartless wish never yet marked a saved soul. You must wrestle with God in prayer, if you would receive effectual grace. There will be strong cries and tears like our Saviour's. Nothing will content you but God's favour and love, if you are in earnest for it, what you need above all other things is God's grace. Whatever else you get, without this you are miserably poor: whatever else you lose, if you get this you are unspeakably happy. Grace is the seed of glory—grace is the first thing. "The Lord will give grace and then glory. Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." All this shows the earnestness and perseverance with which you should pray. Do you further ask how you may know whether you have effectually received grace. I reply, it is marked by *love*. We love that grace which we have received. We glory in it. We value it above every thing. And surely it is above all price—surely every Christian does desire nothing so much as the grace of God. If men think it worth while to make their house comfortable where they only dwell for a few years; if men think it worth while to lay up treasure on earth for a short life, O is it not, I appeal to your understanding as men, is it not infinitely better worth while, to lay up our treasure where we must dwell forever, and to have our wealth in a bank that can never break, and with a banker, who has the universe for his possession, and whose favour is better than life itself? The Apostles so valued grace that in every epistle they salute the churches with this prayer, "Grace be to you." While the term grace is offensive and unintelligible to those who receive it in vain, it is precious and delightful to those who receive it effectually. How the Apostle loves to dwell upon it. "God hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved." One sure note of an effectual reception of grace is a supreme value for it. I remember a time, before I knew my sinfulness and my danger, of being offended with seeing what I then thought so unmeaning a term as grace so often repeated in hymns; but when I felt my true state as a fallen creature, no word was more precious to me than this.

In practically applying the subject, I would solve some fears and address different characters.

I would first *solve some fears* that may hinder and retard you in receiving this grace.

Perhaps you are afraid of this world's ridicule. If you become earnest in religion, you will be counted singular, and you cannot bear the laugh of your companions. O it is one of the most wonderful of the blindnesses and obliquities of our fallen nature, that persons wise and sensible in other things, who would not be laughed out of any worldly gain, should in a case so infinitely important, bend to a sneer, and be turned aside by a mere scoff. Be not you laughed out of your sense of religion. Risk not so foolishly your soul. If you are so afraid of ridicule, think what ridicule will be worst at last. If a foolish companion can thus now affect you, how will you bear to be the laughing stock of Satan, and the scorn of all his hosts through eternity! O the inexpressible folly of squandering away in mere earthly business, in vain pleasures, in idleness, in pomp and empty show, in ambition and the glory of this transitory world, that day of grace in which you might gain solid and everlasting joy and an exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

Perhaps you fear that the day of grace may be past. Do you really fear this; the fear itself is a hopeful sign, and shows that conscience is not yet seared or past feeling; but O let not the enemy contrive by such a fear to keep you inert and inactive, doing nothing till the day of grace be past.

One more fear may be an impediment to you. You may fear that you are not among God's elect, and therefore it is of

no use for you to strive. Who can tell you that you are not among his elect; his decree of election is ever secret, till it is happily manifested by our turning to him; not feignedly, but with all the heart. Repent and believe, and you shall assure your election.

I would in conclusion address different characters:—

Have any reason to think that hitherto they have received the grace of God in vain, that they are yet in their sins: O, I beseech you, "look diligently now, lest you fail of the grace of God." There is no time for farther delay. The Sun of Righteousness has been shining for hours in the day of grace, and you have hitherto been fast asleep; "the night cometh when no man can work;" now cry mightily for grace. O let not the sermon you are now hearing find and leave your heart hardened; but let it be as the awakening voice of the Saviour, leading you effectually to receive his grace.

Have any a besetting sin that entrammels and hampers them. It is the day of grace and Gospel liberty. Bring the power of grace against the power of sin, and it shall conquer your mightiest corruption. Rom. v, 21. Divine grace shall be sufficient for you. Only "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

Are any backsliding from God, and dishonouring your holy vocation by sinful practices—still we proclaim the day of grace, and say, "Yet return again unto me, saith the Lord; I will heal their backslidings and love them freely. Remember from whence you have fallen, repent and do the first works," and all shall be blotted out, and you shall yet be blessed and a blessing.

Are there any waiting, in the use of the means of grace, to receive grace. You shall not wait in vain. Let nothing turn you back from patiently waiting on the Lord, and expecting his grace. Do you please God your Saviour, though for this the whole world should be displeased. Let the righteous hold on his way, and he shall be stronger and stronger. Job xvii, 9. In Jesus there is an inexhaustible fulness, and out of that fulness, day by day, you shall "receive grace for grace."

SERMON III.

ON DEATH.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.—*Eccles. xii, 7.*

It becomes a wise man to prepare for any event of importance which he has reason to believe will assuredly take place. Such a preparation is the more suitable and needful, when the event is not only certain and important, but its character becomes materially affected by our previous conduct with reference to it. And it is yet more incumbent to think beforehand of such an event, if due preparation be attended with immensely beneficial consequences, nay, with nothing less than eternal life and glory. But what tongue can tell the madness of this neglect of preparation, if, in addition to every thing else, the loss of all that bliss, and the suffering of eternal woe, be the certain consequence of that neglect. Death and judgment, and their issues, hell or heaven, must be regarded as events of this description, and for which preparation is no less reasonable than it is indispensable.

O that I could entertain the hope that all your minds, without exception, were quickened to a realizing view of these momentous events. May the Lord bless the consideration of them now, to your everlasting good.

I begin with bringing before you the subject of death,—that time of which it is said in our text—"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

Let us consider,

1. *The event referred to.*
2. *Its immediate consequences.*
3. *Its practical use.*

1. The event referred to.

Solomon, who had been describing, in highly figurative language, the gradual

decay of the body, and its dissolution, (Eccles. xii, 1—6.) in our text, brings before us the immediate results of that dissolution. The event then is death; the separation of the soul from the body; the spirit leaving its frail tabernacle, and entering on a new and untried state of existence. I would point out its certainty, the uncertainty of the time, its nearness, its just demand on man, its subjugation by the Christian.

1. *Its certainty.*

It is not an event which may or may not arrive to us. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Psalm lxxxix, 48. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war." Eccles, viii, 8. You must certainly die; let this truth, which should influence your whole life, penetrate your whole soul. The scenes which you now behold, you will one day cease to behold; you must bid farewell to every earthly object. You *must* die.

O, surely men in general are ignorant of this! They could not have their hearts so engaged in, and filled with cares for the good things of this world, did they know that these are all temporary and transient, and there is certainly one overwhelming event before them, which will forever separate them from all here below.

2. *The Uncertainty of the Time.*

Certain as the event itself, it is uncertain as to the time when it shall happen; and this fearfully increases the importance of being prepared for it. Seventy or eighty years are the farthest ordinary duration of life, but its average length is less than half of seventy. But even thirty years, or one year, or one day, is more than we can be certain will be ours. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." James iv, 13, 14. "Man also knoweth not his time." Eccles. ix, 12. No one living can infallibly tell that his life shall be continued here, even for another day, or another night. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Prov. xxvii, 1. "This night thy soul may be required." Luke xii, 20. There are thousands now alive, multitudes of whom are perhaps inwardly fancying—"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," who have no thought of death as at hand, on whom this very sentence is passed, and will be executed before to-morrow's sun shall rise.

Death may come thus suddenly to some of you! O my brethren, are you prepared for such a summons? "Be ye also ready."

3. *Its nearness.*

Do not suppose it is a distant event,—it is at hand, the Judge is at the door. Say rather with Job—"the graves are ready for me, my days are swifter than a post, they flee away; they are passed as the swift ships;" or with David, "Behold thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily, every man living, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." Psalm xxxix, 5. Only a thin veil of flesh hides the eternal world from your view. Any moment may rend it asunder. You can hardly mention the situation in which some one person or other has not died, or the circumstance in which some have not been called to appear before God. If such an event be so near, how ready ought we to be! "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping."

4. *Its just demand on man.*

This is the most fearful characteristic of death. It is the issue of sin. It is not a mere change from one state to another, but it is the divine appointment in consequence of man's disobedience. "It is appointed unto men once to die." Death is "the wages of sin." It is the punishment of guilt. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v, 12. The Law justly condemns the transgressor;

and its fearful penalty is death. Here is the sting of death. Were not we sinners, death would have no terrors. But now he is the King of Terrors; bringing along with him "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." Awful indeed it is for a sinful creature to fall into the hands of the living God, and under the immediate wrath of him who says, "Vengeance belongeth unto me." This is the death of death. Are we provided against this evil? All defence and security against other evils, while this tremendous evil is disregarded, is but mere vanity and childish folly. God himself is described as tenderly expostulating with men on this subject. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Deut. xxxii.

5. *The subjugation of Death by the Believer.*

There is a full victory to be obtained over this mighty enemy, the great conqueror of the human race. But to attain this victory, none less than the Son of God entered into the conflict. He became partaker of our flesh and blood, and yielded himself to death, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and deliver those, who through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage." Heb. ii, 14, 15. On his cross he spoiled this principality of power. Col. ii, 15. He has gone before us through the dark tomb; he knows its innermost recesses, and so complete is the victory, that the Apostle says, "He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. i, 10. Now the believer in him may defy this his greatest and last foe, and say, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Were you all, my brethren, true believers in the Lord Jesus, death would be the happiest subject on which I could address you. This victory would be yours. May the precious gift of faith be bestowed from above upon you all. Remember the solemn assurance of our Lord Christ: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." John v, 51.

Can I, as your minister, look at this victory without longing that you should be among the victors. It is my fervent prayer to God for you, that you may all partake of this victory; that you may all share this triumph. God, in mercy grant it for his Son's sake.

Such then is death, the event referred to; it is certain to all, it is uncertain as to the time, but it is near at hand, and the justly deserved penalty of sin, and the believer obtains a full victory over it.

We proceed to consider,

II. The immediate consequences of Death.

"The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

The consequences here specified are two; according to the distinct parts of man, his body and his soul. There is the decay of the body in the dust, and the return of the soul to God.

1. *The Decay of the Body in the Dust.*

The body was originally dust. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." (Gen. ii. 7.) It teaches us a humbling and profitable lesson. Man's body was not formed of any thing so valuable and solid as gold or silver; it was not formed of any thing so hard and durable even as iron or stone; dust, the least valuable of this earth's materials, that which is frailest and soonest dissipated, was used by our Divine Creator. His infinite wisdom and his almighty power, moulded and fashioned the most unlikely of all materials, the very dust on which we tread, into the fair proportion, and beauty, and comeliness of the human form. Learn the wisdom of God, learn the nothingness of man.

But this beauty of man soon passes away. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth." (Isa. xl. 6, 7.) "The grace of

the fashion of it perisheth." (James i. 10.) Never forget, my dear brethren, that you are sustained from day to day, and from hour to hour, simply by divine power. Your life is entirely dependent on the continued support of that Almighty Being by whom you were first made. Any thing that God commissions is powerful enough to cause your immediate death. "We dwell," says Job, "in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth. Job iv, 19. Not before the elephant or the lion, the tiger or the bear, merely, not before that which is strong and powerful, but before the feeblest insect, that which itself can hardly be touched without being crushed; when it is commissioned by God, we are even crushed. God has but to remove his hand from under us, and we fall into the dust. "Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust." Ps. civ, 29.

This is according to that original sentence pronounced on man's first transgression, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground, for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Gen. iii, 19. Where are the bodies of all the millions that have peopled our earth? they are mingled with the dust on which those now living are moving and treading. Where are the myriads that have inhabited this busy and crowded metropolis from century to century; they are mouldering in the dust, and they are mingled with the earth. Once the eye glistened with joy and delight, once the ear was ravished with music, once the tongue was eloquent to speak, the hands powerful to labour, and the feet swift to run. Once the social circle was delighted with the mirth of the child, or cheered by the love of the mother, or instructed by the wisdom of the father, or directed by the counsel, and gladdened with the face of the friend: but all is now silent in the grave; or if the inhabitant have an expressive language, Christian language is this, "The grave is mine house, I have made my bed in darkness; I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." Job xvii, 13, 14. Here, my brethren, you and I must certainly be carried, here is "the house appointed for all living." Our dust will soon be mingled with the earth, till that day when the Almighty God who first created us, shall by his powerful voice re-collect the scattered particles, reform our frame, revivify the dust, recall its inhabitant, the immortal spirit, and raise us up to the judgment of the great day.

Are these things so? You know they are. My brethren, let us not then spend all our care on the perishing body. Still less, abuse this doctrine of human mortality to vain pleasure, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Be not thus deceived. Death may be changed from a curse to a blessing. You may, on Christian principles, find death lose all its sting, and be the very gate to life and glory. Fly to Jesus Christ, believe in him, "hear his saying," and you "shall not taste of death." John viii, 51, 52.

May our God raise you all to the high hopes and the full joy of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ!

SERMON IV.

ON DEATH.

Then shall the dust return unto the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.—*Eccles. xii, 7.*

We proposed to consider from these words, 1. The event referred to; 2. The consequences of that event; and, 3. Its practical use. We have already considered, the event referred to, Death, under five views:—its certainty to all, its uncertainty as to the time, its nearness, its just demand on man, and its subjugation by the Christian. We have also entered on the consideration of the consequences of that event as twofold: the return of the body to the dust, (which was explained in the last sermon) and the return of the soul to God.

We proceed to consider,

2. *The Return of the Soul to God.*

"The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

You observe here a marked distinction in the account of the body and the soul: the body is dissolved and mingled with the earth from which it was taken; the spirit lives and returns to the living God who gave it. There is no sleep of the soul. The moment it is unclothed by the putting off the body, that moment it appears before the God of the spirits of all flesh. 2 Cor. v, 4—6. The Apostle's statement is decisive; he speaks of his 'desire to depart and be with Christ, which," he says, "is far better;" far better than living on earth, even though he could say, "To me to live is Christ," and amidst all the scenes of usefulness and the spiritual joys which he had here below.

When God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, he received a living soul, an immaterial and immortal spirit, which shall never cease to exist. Here is the true grandeur of man. It is not the king's palace or the king's throne; it is not earthly wisdom, or talents, or riches, that constitute man's nobility and glory. Every babe in its mother's arms, every peasant in his cottage of clay, every poor heathen idolater, every savage roaming through the woods, has, lodged in his bosom, that which is of more value than worlds upon worlds—even an immortal soul. He has that within which is indestructible and imperishable. You cannot put a period to its existence: men may "kill the body, but after that they have no more that they can do;" they cannot destroy the soul. Your soul lives, and shall live for ever.

Mark then the course of the soul after death. Immediately on the death of the body the soul appears before God—solitary unaccompanied by any earthly attendants; the master without his servants, and the servant without his master; the husband without his wife, and the wife without the husband; the parent without the child, and the child without the parent. Alone, and at the gate of death, stripped of all earthly titles and distinctions, and bared of all riches, tenements, and possessions, just as "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out:" 1 Tim. vi, 7, so by itself, the spirit enters the eternal world, and sees God face to face.

God, that has been so little in man's thoughts, now appears to the soul in all his unutterable purity, and majesty, and glory.—God is now every thing to the soul: all other beings are lost in the brightness of his presence; and now first man beholds him as he is—so holy that he charges the angels with folly, so pure that the heavens are not clean in his sight, so lovely and resplendent that the eye of the believer gazes with unceasing delight on his beauty. Ps. xxvii, 4; Isa. xxxiii, 7.

When the spirit thus returns to God, an immediate sentence goes forth, deciding its condition for ever. There are two, and but two, distinct abodes for the spirit, in the regions of the departed, abodes in which each must dwell till the general resurrection of all flesh at the last day.

There is *the abode of the lost;* there are "the spirits in prison, (1 Pet. iii, 19,) along with the angels that sinned, cast down into hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Pet. ii, 4. When the soul of the wicked leaves its body, and has received sentence from God, it is immediately consigned to the regions of woe. When the rich man was buried, his soul was directly in the place of misery, and "in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment," longing for Lazarus even to "dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool his tongue, for he was tormented in that flame." O tremendous abode—all hope for ever gone; the blackness of darkness surrounding them on every side; the face of him that sitteth on the throne frowning upon them, and the wrath of the Lamb over them through eternity! O flee from this wrath to come; and may God, in tender mercy, give you to know the things which belong to your everlasting peace!

There is, however, blessed for ever be our God, another abode, *the abode of the righteous*, in which their spirits dwell till their bodies shall be raised from the grave. On leaving their bodies, their spirits are received and are welcomed by

the Lord Jesus our Saviour; him they at length behold face to face; they see his glory which he had with the Father, before the world was; they have sweet access to God as a loving Father, and full communion with him; they dwell in the heavenly Jerusalem, amid the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. Thus Stephen prays, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; thus Paul desired to be present with the Lord; thus Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; and thus the penitent thief was assured, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise. In those blessed regions, they "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," free from every sorrow and temptation, from every fear and anxiety, from every want and every care; they rejoice in the Saviour's presence and love, waiting for the accomplishment of the number of God's elect, and the final triumph of the resurrection day, and the consummation of bliss, both in body and soul.

O blissful state! Would to God you may all arrive there! O may we sacrifice every thing for this; may we help each other to gain it! Let us beware of throwing any hindrances in the way of each other. My beloved people, O that I may meet you there! My joy and crown will be your possession of this exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF THE SUBJECT.

1. *Learn the Evil of Death to the Wicked.*

What tongue can describe, what heart can imagine all the unutterable evils comprehended in this one word, death, as it regards the wicked! That which is seen is painful, the weeping friends around the bed, the bodily suffering, the gasping breath, the groans and distress, and expiring sighs, the breathless pallid corpse, the coffin, the funeral procession, the dark grave, and the mouldering body;—but all this is but the shadow of death. That which is unseen is death's substance; sin and God's wrath against the sinner; the immediate presence of the offended Judge, and the irremediable consequences which follow. Remember, oh, remember, death is a certain event, it must overtake you. You cannot by all possible contrivances guard against its approach; all the gold of Mexico or Peru, all the skill of the ablest physicians, all the care and tenderness of the most beloved friends, all the efforts of forecast and providence cannot turn away death. He laughs at all human contrivances, and with steady step proceeds onward conquering all. You may imagine a security, but the Bible says, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." Remember, oh! remember, death brings you into the presence of your Creator. However you may have managed to shut out the thoughts of God, however you may have shunned his presence, and have lived as without God in the world, then you must appear before his searching eye, and be under his immediate hand. Remember, oh! remember, death decides your state for eternity. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Eccles. ix, 10. "In the place where the tree falleth, there shall it be." Eccles. ix, 3. In that world the saying shall be realized, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Rev. xxii, 11. Between the abodes of the righteous and the wicked, there is an impassable space, "a great gulf fixed," which neither righteous nor wicked can pass over. Remember, then, oh! remember, that at death the wicked begin an eternity of woe. What evil can be compared with this—say you lose every thing for religion, you forfeit situation, friends, health, life itself: O happy loss, if you may but escape the bitter pains of eternal death. Lord, let not our eyes any longer be blinded by Satan, enable us to see our danger! awake, poor sinner, awake! open, O Lord, open thou the eyes of sinners, even of some sinners now in thy presence, and awaken them from the sleep of sin!

O my brethren, a time is coming which will awaken you, when death comes you will be roused, and cry out for a little longer space, and hell will be seen to be a real and tremendous evil. Believe me,

t is now the same evil as it will be seen o be on your death-bed, only with this blessed difference: you have now time o escape the evil, and to attain security or ever. O redeem time for your soul's alvation!

2. *Learn the Blessedness of Death to he Believer.*

In truth, in the evil sense, the believer ever dies. Our Saviour Christ says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, hall never die." John xi, 26. "If a nan keep my saying he shall never see eath." All that is evil in death, is by Christ so removed, that the believer may ay, "Though I walk through the valley f the shadow of death, I will fear no vil." As it regards the body, if it be or a moment an enemy, it is the last nemy, and will assuredly at length be tterly destroyed. Christ has also the eys of death, and can, and does set at iberty all its captives. And as it regards he soul, death is our best friend; it is qually with life itself numbered among he Christian privileges—"whether life r death, all 'are yours"—it is a dark loor, but the darkness is on this side and ot on the other: when it opens, it introduces us to light, and life, and glory, nd shuts out for ever all darkness and nisery. It is the end of trial and temptation; no more conflicts nor warfare; o more sins nor sorrows can harass and njure the happy believer. He is shut in y death from the world of death, and rought by this his last enemy safe into nansions of endless life. The Scriptures lift up the veil that hides the eterial world, and show us the angels waiting round the pillow of the dying believer, longing to have another happy spirit added to them; the Scriptures show the Christian, that, to him this is he land of darkness and tears; and the nseen world, the true land of light and oy: "in thy presence is fulness of joy." May we have but a good hope through grace of this happiness, and we shall ong, not for life, but for death, (Phil, i, 23,) and say with David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Ps. xlii, 2.

3. *Learn the Importance of Preparation for death.*

It is not a speculative subject we have now brought before you. It is not a vain thing. It deeply and intimately concerns you. It will add much to your comfort here to be delivered from the bondage of the fear of death, and what a glorious truth, you may be delivered from all fear of death; you may be safe from those never-ending evils, and be a partaker of that never-ending felicity to which it introduces God's servants. I repeat again and again, you *must* die; however young, or wise, or strong, or powerful, you *must* die. Secure then a better life; like Noah, prepare a refuge. He "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Heb. xi, 7. Remember, that preparation for death is not a work to be done in a little time. A whole life ought to be devoted to it, but people defer to the last dregs of life that great work of life which requires all our energies and powers. Here is the great artifice of Satan; he prevails on men to put off till it be too late, the great work of preparation. "They say Peace and safety, till sudden destruction comes and they cannot escape." The longer you defer this work, the greater and more arduous you will find it to be, the less strength you will have for it, and the more your bodily infirmities will disable you. Now, even "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Do you ask how you are to prepare for death? O fly without delay to Christ Jesus, the only Deliverer from death, the only Conqueror over death? He says, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." John xi, 25. Now, your sins may be all washed away in his blood; now, your souls may be covered with the spotless and glorious robe of his righteousness; now, his Spirit will make you meet for the heavenly inheritance. O apply, I beseech you, apply this very day to him! "Before you give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids," seek your Saviour "while he may be found, call upon him while

he is near. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life, (1 John v, 12,) but the wrath of God abideth on him." John v, 36. Here is your first and chief preparation for death, to "win Christ and be found in him."

But besides this chief preparation, there is a further meetness; a state of actual readiness which well becomes the Christian, that death may never take him by surprise. The wise virgins slumbered and slept. But "the children of the light, and the children of the day," should not slumber. "Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober." Christians, "let your lights be burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.—Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." Meditate often, therefore, on death. Regard it therefore as one of your blessings; "putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

SERMON V.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. —*John v*, 28, 29.

Our blessed Lord here distinctly declares the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; to the righteous a most cheering and joyful truth. Those who have wept over the lifeless corpse of a departed saint, and have followed with bitter anguish the funeral bier to the grave, and have seen the coffin which contained all that remained of this beloved friend deposited in the silent grave, and have thought of it as lost, and almost lost for ever, may lift up their heads. That body is the sacred dust of him who believed in Jesus, and which the Divine Spirit once inhabited: it is not dead, it only sleeps in the Lord, and shall revive again with new beauty and freshness, fashioned like to his glorious body, "according to the working whereby he is enabled to subdue all things to himself."

The doctrine of the resurrection is eminently essential and fundamental. When some among the Corinthians denied this doctrine, the Apostle urgently pressed its importance: "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead" —and alluding to the many sufferings of the first Christians, he tells them, "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable;" and assures them, "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."

May your minds then, my brethren, be well established in this truth. It is Satan's great aim to weaken our faith, and to obscure our view of the resurrection. Because we see it not, and there seem apparent hindrances from the decay of the body, sinful man easily persuades himself that there will be no resurrection, and even Christians are often deprived of the comfort and advantage they might possess, were their faith on this momentous subject more clear and distinct.

We will consider,

1. The resurrection itself.
2. Its certain approach,
3. Its universal extent,
4. Its decisive results,
5. Its practical improvement.

1. THE RESURRECTION ITSELF.

They that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

We notice the body raised, the voice calling it forth, the coming forth.

1. *The body raised.*

Our Lord is here speaking of the resurrection of the body. Properly speaking the soul never dies; it is the body only that is mingled with the dust, and laid in the grave, and the same body shall be raised. If it were another body, it would not be a resurrection, but a new creation. Job's testimony on this point is very clear. "Though after my skin,

worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for my self and mine eyes shall behold and not another." Job xix, 26. Our identical body, once laid in the grave, shall be raised up. The souls of the wicked are in present torment; a torment that has a fearful expectation of the future, and a torment that will be amazingly aggravated, when the body in which they sinned shall rise again, with all the tremendous recollection and revival of past sins, to be the inlet of a sorer punishment, to be reunited to the soul, for the final condemnation of both. O may you all be delivered from this woe.

The souls of the righteous are on the other hand in present blessedness, with a joyful anticipation of an increased bliss. They are described as "absent from the body and present with the Lord." 2 Cor. v 6. Our Lord, from that declaration of God to Moses, long after the death of the Patriarchs, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," takes occasion to show that they were then living, for "he is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, for all live to him;" and seeing that he is the God not merely of the soul, but of the whole person, he also shows from the same passage the resurrection of the dead, and therefore that the body shall be raised from its state of death. Incalculably will their joy be enhanced when their poor vile body, ransomed from the power of the grave, and redeemed from death, shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, with every capacity to serve God perfectly and forever. May you all enter into this joy.

2. *The Voice calling it forth.*

Shall hear his voice.

The resurrection of the body seems to be attended with some apparently insurmountable difficulties.—Some bodies have been consumed to ashes, and the ashes scattered over the surface of the earth. Others have been devoured by wild beasts, and have become a part of their substance, and others again have been the food of their fellow men. From the difficulties the Sadducees of old denied the resurrection of the dead. Like modern infidels they insinuate impossibilities against clear revelation. Our Saviour meets all such cavils, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." We assert then from the word of God that the same body shall rise again.—How is this possible? To man even an adequate conception is impossible. But look at what calls them forth —the voice of Christ, the voice of the Son of God, the voice of the Creator of all things, the voice of "God over all blessed for ever." That voice said, "Let there be light, and there was light." That voice said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature, and it was so." That voice said, "Let us make man, and man was created." Oh the unutterable power of that Divine Redeemer whom an unbelieving world slights, scoffs at, and scorns! It will not be so in that great day, but as when, at the tomb of Lazarus, the voice, *Lazarus, come forth*, penetrated every bone, every muscle, and every nerve of the decaying body, "and he that was dead came forth," so when, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God"—proclaiming, "All ye that are in the graves, come forth;" the energy of that voice will break through every obstacle, search the inmost recesses of every receptacle of the dead, bring together every part, and reanimate the whole; not one grave shall retain its tenant, or refuse obedience to the almighty and all-pervading summons.

Talk any of difficulties? all creation furnishes you with emblems and illustrations. Every fresh day, with its new light and heat and varied blessings is a resurrection from the darkness of the night. Every verdant spring, with all its freshness and life and luxuriance, is a a resurrection from the frost, the torpor and the death of winter. Every harvest which we see waving in the fields, is a resurrection of the seed corn buried, dead, and quickened again. Innumerable insects floating in the air, were once apparently inanimate substances, but they have risen again to life and activity. It is idle to talk of difficulties to him to whom nothing is impossible; and why, it may be well asked, why

should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead, whose word has assured us that he will? If a watchmaker can take a watch to pieces, and again put together the parts as they lie before him, the Creator of all may well reconstruct the human frame which by death he has for a season separated, and the parts of which, wherever they are, all lie before him.

O brethren, what a shout will that be which re-echoes through creation, and reaches and rouses the slumbering dust! How will it sound to us? Will it be a voice full of woe, or a voice full of joy? it depends on your present state. O fly to Christ now, confess him now, if you would hear that sound without alarm; if you would welcome that voice as a voice of joy.

3. *The coming forth.*

We have an emblematic representation of this in the valley which was full of bones: (Ezek. xxxvii, 1—10,) these at the word of the Lord came together, and the sinews and the flesh were brought upon them, and the breath came into them, and they lived an exceeding great army.

But it is not one valley, but every place shall give up the dead there contained. In Daniel it is asserted, "They that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." Dan. xii, 2. In the description of that day it is said, (Rev. xx, 13,) "The sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them."

Curiosity may here ask a thousand questions: "how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" 1 Cor. xv, 35. We cannot go a single step beyond the Scriptures, and the Bible was not written to satisfy mere curiosity, but to make us wise unto salvation. Oh how joyful will be the resurrection of the righteous! "The dead in Christ shall rise first," (1 Thess. iv, 16; 1 Cor. xv, 23,) and those then living on the earth, who believe in his name, "shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air." They will all come forth perfectly distinct and distinguishable: "we shall know as we are known." If we are "to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," we shall know those blessed saints. When the Apostle says, the Thessalonians were to be his "hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing," he manifestly implies that he should know them. All our faculties will rather be infinitely improved and heightened, than diminished; as there is a difference between the child and the man, so will there be a vast superiority in our capacity and knowledge, and the coming forth of the righteous will be as the rising of the sun in the morning, full of beauty, and full of glory, rejoicing to run his course.

But O how fearful will be the coming forth of the wicked! Imagine that day, then, in which they come forth, suddenly awakened out of the sleep of death, amidst the crumbling world, the heavens departing as a scroll when it is rolled together, the mountains and islands moving out of their places, the elements melting with fervent heat: the wicked are affected by one thing more than all these convulsions of worlds; they dread more than all "the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb;" and they cry to the moving rocks and mountains, Fall on us and hide us.

Brethren, you and I must be in the number then raised. The Lord grant it may be among the righteous, and not among the wicked!

2. *Its certain approach.*

The hour is coming, it is fixed, it will be sudden and unavoidable.

1. It is *fixed.*

God has fixed a precise and particular day. "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." Nay, the hour is determined, as our Lord declares, the hour is coming. But though fixed, God has not revealed it, and therefore the precise time is not known to any created being; nor was the Mediator commissioned to reveal it to man: "That day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." As the hour of his death is unknown to each individual, so the hour of the general resurrection is unknown to any part of created beings. This is for many important ends; and the practical lessons

are, to take heed not to be "overcharged with the pleasures and cares" of this life, but ever to be watchful and prayerful. Brethren, every day that passes along, every hour that hastens away, every pulse that beats within you, shortens the distance between you, and this great and last scene. There is no hindering its advance. You may sooner stop the sun in its progress across the circuit of the sky, than delay the approach of this fixed hour.

2. The hour will be also *sudden.*

It is frequently compared in the Scriptures to the coming of a thief. If the master "of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." Matt. xxiv, 43. "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." 1 Thess. v, 2, and 2 Pet. iii, 10, 11. Hence its coming will be sudden and unexpected. The mass of mankind will be living and acting just as they do now, giving their minds wholly to worldly things, (Matt. xxiv, 37,) and thinking of nothing less than of the resurrection day. In the parable of the virgins it is said, "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" Midnight is the hour when men are wrapped up in darkness and slumber, and wholly unthinking of danger. O brethren, often place yourselves in the situation in which men will then be placed. Think within yourselves, "What would be my feelings if the trumpet were now to sound, if the great shout were now to be heard, if the heavens were now to roll away, and the great white throne now to appear; am I ready? Is the Judge my friend?"

3. The hour will be *unavoidable.*

No skill or wisdom of man, no human eloquence can turn it aside; no riches can bribe a delay; no combined strength of armies or of nations can retard it, and no infidelity hinder its approach. As all the army of Pharaoh could not stop the returning waves of the Red Sea; as all the multitudes of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah could not restrain the fire from heaven; as the inhabitants of the whole earth, with all their unbelief and their multitude, could not stay the waters of the deluge, so impossible will it be for men to restrain the progress of that hour, "in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and in which the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." O brethren, seeing this, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" I confess, when I look at these things, I feel more especially my own sinful negligence and coldness. O that I were myself more alive to them, then I should be more likely to quicken you! Brethren, we are mutually concerned in this all-important hour; let us quicken each other to a more anxious care of the soul, that this day may not find us unprepared. As your minister, I entreat your prayers, that I myself, realizing these truths, may speak more fervently, and more according to their unspeakable magnitude, and you may thus be more stirred up to seek the true refuge.

3. Its universal extent.

All *that are in the graves.*

It might have afforded some hope to the wicked, if only the just were to have been raised at the last; though the expectation of being entirely reduced to nothing, as if we had never been, is in itself most gloomy and miserable: but there is not the refuge of even such an expectation. The Scriptures are clear that all the dead shall rise again: it is intimated in the declaration in Daniel, they "that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Dan. xii, 2. St. Paul clearly asserts, "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." Acts xxiv, 15. Our Lord assures us, "all that are in the graves shall come forth." In the account of the last judgment, we find, that "before him shall be gathered all nations,"—the wicked as well as the righteous. The Apostle tells the Romans, "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," (Rom. xiv, 10,) and assures the Corinthians more in detail, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the

things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 2 Cor. v, 10. Thus plain and decisive are the Scriptures, as to the universality of the resurrection.

It comprehends, therefore, all ages: from him who has lived the most lengthened period, to the youngest babe; all shall rise again from the grave. Have you, my children, lost an aged Christian father or mother? There you shall meet them again; and if you follow their faith and patience, meet them at the Saviour's right hand. Have you, Christian parents, lost your babes? You shall then recover them, and out of the mouths of those "babes, God will perfect praise." All ranks and classes shall then be raised—kings and princes, nobles and men of wealth; not indeed with their worldly distinctions, but they shall rise equally with the poor and needy. Statesmen, not at the head of empires, and generals of armies, not with collections of armed men at their command; but individually to appear before God. The Apostle John having beheld that scene in prophetic vision, says of it, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Rev. xx, 12.

O brethren, methinks the universality of our death and resurrection should much endear us to each other. Those who have been in one common war, and have shared in one victory, love each other as fellow-soldiers; those who have been wrecked in one storm, and saved in one life-boat, love each other as fellow-sailors: and shall not we, who have to pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and have all to hear the trumpet sound, and have all to be raised again from the graves—shall not we, as fellow-travellers in the same pilgrimage, love one another fervently, and with a pure heart?

But I forbear the further consideration of this subject till the evening.

SERMON VI.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.—*John v*, 28, 29.

We this morning proposed to consider five points from this text:—1. The resurrection itself; 2. Its certain approach; 3. Its universal extent; 4. Its decisive results; 5. Its practical improvement. Three of these have been explained. In considering the resurrection itself, we noticed, The body raised, The voice calling it forth, and The coming forth. In considering its approach, we showed that it was fixed, and would be sudden and unavoidable; and then explained its universal extent. We have now to consider,

4. Its decisive results.
5. Its practical improvement.

4. Its decisive results.

They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life? and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

We notice, the characters described, and the division made.

1. *The Characters described.* They are two fold—the good and the evil.

There are multitudes of distinctions here; high and low, rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned: there are multitudes of characters; the proud and the abject, the sober and respectable, the moral and the decent, the formalist and the sincere, the scorner and the serious, the believer and the unbeliever; but they are all arranged under two classes hereafter, and classes which have no reference to their worldly situation, or to their outward appearance before men; but to their true character in the sight of God.

One character is marked by this—*the doers of good.*

Naturally man is selfish, and aims only at his own aggrandizement, or pleasure, or advantage; but when he is truly

converted to God, brought to see his danger through sin, his guilt before God, and his just desert; when he is further brought to see his salvation by grace through faith; then, that deeply extended, that strong and multiplied root of selfishness, is shaken to its farthest ramifications, and it shall finally be altogether uprooted. He is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Gratitude becomes the constraining principle of action, his faith works by love, and the great aim of his life is to do good. Though we "are saved by grace through faith," and that "not of works, lest any man should boast," yet is this salvation ever seen by good works as its inseparable fruit; they are not the cause but the effect of salvation; not the condition, but the part—the essential part of salvation. We "are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." The Christian, like his Saviour, is a man going about doing good; this is his daily life and business, and he seeks to fill every hour with good works.

O let me exhort you to be doers of good; whatever your situation be, aim at this—to do good. You cannot do too much of that which is really good before God and man; let none of your talents be laid up unimproved; lay out time, and knowledge, and strength, and property, and all you have, to do good.

Another character is marked by this —"doers of evil."

And here we must distinguish between what God reckons evil, and what man reckons evil; for very often "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." Luke xvi, 15. This is the case with all the works of unconverted men. In the language of the Thirteenth Article of the Church of England, "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God.....yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." This may serve to undeceive your hearts, who are trusting in your own goodness. All your actions, when perfectly right before man, may be fearfully wrong before God; before man, your character may be unimpeachable, and your actions upright and benevolent; in human society you may be a noble and praiseworthy character, yet, before God, a doer of evil. That is good in the sight of God, which springs from faith in him and love to him; but if you have not obeyed the command to believe in the Lord Jesus; if, in what you do, you have no eye to the glory of God, no regard to his will, no care to please him; if self be the real end of all your actions, then is your life full of evil in his sight, then is all the guilt of unpardoned sin upon you; then will you rise at the last day, Oh! I speak it in pain, but I speak it in faithfulness and love, you will rise at the last day among the doers of evil.

May the Divine Spirit now speak powerfully in your consciences, and unmask you to yourselves, and lead you to see your true state; that ere it be too late, and the lamp of life expire, you may know and follow what belongs to your peace!

We proceed to consider, *The Division made.*

This is two-fold also, according to the two characters. We notice,

1. *The Resurrection of Damnation.* The doers of evil are brought before the awful and all-penetrating eye of the great Judge of all. That glorious Being wearing our form, was mocked and despised, and the evil doers still despise his name and slight his grace; but what words can utter the horrors included in this description—the resurrection of damnation, when they are brought before the once despised, but now glorious Emmanuel! As the body is raised, all the sins that every member of that body has committed will be manifested. All the false, and angry, and proud words, that the tongue has spoken, all the evil ways in which the feet have walked, all the sinful converse to which the ear has listened, all the wicked works that the hands have done, will then be exhibited before an assembled world, in the very resurrection of sinful men. Gladly would the soul escape from the accursed re-union with the body in which it sinned. The suicide, in his madness to es-

cape a temporary evil, rushes on an eternal evil; but vain is the attempt to escape in this resurrection; there is no possibility of destroying our existence in that world; not one suicide can take that life away. Their bodies are raised incorruptible; but this only embitters the woe to which they rise. Their understandings then will be cleared to discern the folly of sin, and the truth of God's word; there will not be one infidel at the resurrection of damnation: this again heightens their woe. The commission of some sins also may cease; they cannot cheat, they cannot get drunk, they cannot be licentious: but while the power of gratification is gone, the love of sin remains, as a worm that never dies. Yet all this is but the beginning of sorrows: the fearful word, damnation, exposes to our view another evil, beyond conception tremendous—the wrath of God, his curse, the terrors of the Lord: and this their portion forever!

My beloved people, these are the solemn truths of God's word. I believe them from my heart; and can I believe them, and think that any of you are exposed to this greatest of all possible dangers, and not warn you, and exhort you, and entreat you to have pity on yourselves, and hasten your escape from the coming storm?

But there is another scene! O, I rejoice to bring it before you. Would to God you might all attain that better resurrection!

The Resurrection of Life.

This resurrection to life is all in Christ. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory—if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." Our union with Christ here, is the root of our rising to life hereafter. The Apostle dwells at length on this subject in the xvth chapter of 1 Corinthians, as on a theme in which the heart was at home. He says, showing the origin of our resurrection, "In Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming.....There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.....We shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; and then," and not till then fully, "shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." There is much here that we cannot comprehend; it is a glory like that of the sun, the very brightness of which dazzles and blinds. A spiritual body seems to unite opposite natures, and to contradict all our notions; but "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Unspeakable, then, inconceivably glorious will be the human frame. The glorious body of Christ as transfigured on the Mount, seems the fullest representation of the risen body of his people.—"His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light:" so also "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.—They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever."

O! surpassing glory! when all the righteous are assembled above, and these myriads of suns, beaming forth rays of splendour, are forever shining in the glorious firmament of heaven; their spiritual, their powerful, their incorruptible, their glorified bodies, not clogging, but aiding and giving activity and quickness to the intellectual faculty, and all engaged in the sight and enjoyment and service of God, who is all, and in all, they together joint sharers of each other's bliss for ever and ever.

Should not our hearts faint to reach this bliss? should not our souls aspire after this glory? O you who are following riches, here are enduring riches! O

you who are thirsting after pleasure, here are pleasures for evermore! O you who are panting after honour, by patient continuance in well doing, here seek for glory, and honour, and immortality!

But I hasten to close with

5. THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THIS SUBJECT.

What does the doctrine of the resurrection teach us?

1. *It should strengthen our hope of Regeneration.* This is the very lesson which our Lord is here drawing. You observe his argument in the verses before our text, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man." He then confirms this statement of his giving spiritual life, by the yet more remarkable fact of our text, the resurrection of the body, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." He who can raise the dead body, can also quicken the dead soul. O blessed truth! We need not preach the Saviour's power to open the graves and bring all therein to judgment, without preaching also his present ability to give you spiritual life. Desire you the resurrection of life? Remember, "he that hath the Son hath life," even eternal life; and the voice of Christ sounding forth in his word, and proclaimed by his ministers, is effectual to give spiritual life. O may we find it so at this time. Lord Jesus, quicken the dead here. Give to multitudes here spiritual life. I long for the day, when I shall see the symptoms of spiritual life multiply, and behold you all evidently and deeply concerned about your eternal interests.

It should quicken us to a Holy Life.

As the harvest is according to the seed sown, so is the resurrection. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Do you desire to escape the fearful resurrection of damnation; do you desire a beautiful and glorious body, and a holy and perfect soul? then live to God now, in doing good. When St. Paul speaks of his "having hopes toward's God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust," he adds —"And herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men." Often place these last scenes before your eyes; if you are becoming cold and careless in the ways of Christ, think of the resurrection day.

It should raise us above worldly sorrow.

How peculiarly heavy were Job's sorrows and afflictions; but in the midst of them he draws comfort from this doctrine: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." David found similar consolation, "My flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." Death is but a rest previous to the morning of the resurrection. When we lose a beloved brother in Christ, we may, and should, mourn the loss, (Isa. lvii, 1.) but we cannot sorrow "even as those which have no hope;" for all "which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. 1 Thess. iv, 13, 14. The time is short—the resurrection day is at hand, when we shall again receive the dead to life.

It illustrates all God's perfections.

Now many things are dark and obscure; we see things but in part. Wicked men seem to go unpunished; they often have authority and power, and use it wickedly; good men are tried and afflicted, despised, and lightly esteemed; many things seem quite out of place, and Satan triumphs, and the godly mourn, and the wicked flourish. But the resurrection day will clear up things; just as the sun dispels the mists and fogs, and discovers to us the beauties of nature, so the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in the morning of the resurrection, will clear up all the now hidden beauties of providence and grace. We shall discover with inexpressible clearness and dis-

tinctness, the wisdom and truth, the justice and mercy of all God's dealings, and say from the heart, "He hath done all things well.

It completes the work of Redemption. In one view, that was completed when on the cross our Saviour uttered the words, "It is finished." A further step in its completeness was taken when he, "the first-begotten of the dead, rose from the dead." The first fruits only, however, of them that slept were then presented to God; but when all that sleep in Jesus are raised, then shall the last enemy, death, be destroyed, yes, swallowed up in victory, and the grand design of redemption "in bringing many sons to glory," be completely accomplished.

And now, brethren, I have set these things before you, let me ask what are your purposes? The Gospel is either "a savour of death unto death," or "a savour of life unto life." If, just excited for a moment, you leave the house of God and your seriousness is dissipated in worldly conversation, and you return to your old course again, you will be more hardened than ever and farther from God, and more likely to perish with the wicked, than if the Gospel light had never beamed upon you. I beseech you, every one for your own sake, for my sake, for the Saviour's sake, let not this be the sad end of our labours, no, not to one soul among you.

But if, on the other hand, this all important subject lead any hitherto careless to inquire, "What must I do to be saved;" I proclaim in their ears, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

And as to you my Christian brethren, may this subject quicken every spiritual affection in your hearts. May you say and feel with the Apostle, "I count all things but loss for Christ, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

SERMON VII.

THE JUDGMENT DAY.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.—*Rev. xx*, 11—13.

And is there such an event to be anticipated? and must earth and heaven fly away, and this great white throne, with its awful and transcendantly glorious Judge seated upon it, appear? and must the whole human race stand before Him? And every one be judged according to their works? Surely every thought is directed towards, and influenced by such an event. Surely all other matters that can engage the mind of man will be subordinate to this overwhelming truth! We say every Sabbath, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge," and yet, alas! alas! the prospects of any temporal loss or worldly advantage will far more readily enter into the mind, and occupy the the whole attention of those beings for whom that judgment is set.

Surely were there not a tremendous perverseness within, a deep slumber, an awful death in trespasses and sins, to this event all eyes would be directed, on this all thoughts would be engaged, by this all cares engrossed. Every fear and hope, joy and sorrow, would have a reference and bearing to our acceptance at last before the great and final Judge.

How is this unconcern to be removed, but by distinctly placing the subject before you? May our God enable me to do so at this time!

We have already considered death conducting the spirit into the eternal world, the awful realities of the resurrec-

tion, the sound of the trumpet, the great shout heard, the dead bodies awakened, the Judge descending, and the two-fold resurrection, that of life and that of damnation. We will now notice more particularly the proceedings of this great day, under these heads:

1. The Judge upon the throne,
2. The assembly gathered before Him,
3. The opening of the books,
4. The Judgment itself.

1. The Judge upon the Throne.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.

We have here the throne of Judgment; the Judge seated on it; the effect of his appearance.

1. *The throne of Judgment—a great white throne.*

It is a *throne* under which is conveyed to us the idea of majesty, and dominion. It is the throne of the Most High, all whose decrees are authoritative and absolute, equitable and holy. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." There can be no appeal to any other tribunal; the decision of this judgment will irreversibly fix our condition.

It is a *great* throne, which points out the magnitude and extent of the judgment to be then made. What God calls great, is truly so. How great the judgment of that day, when all called great in this world bows before it: when apostate angels, who sinned before our world was, and all the generations, and tribes, and nations of the whole earth, through successive ages, are summoned, and which the glorious heavenly host, cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, surround! How great when the sentence of him who sits upon it shall determine the final everlasting state of millions upon millions of immortal beings.

It is a *white* throne, emblematic of its purity and uprightness. There can be neither partiality nor error in its decisions. There is no fear of consequences to turn the Judge aside from the path of strictest justice, and no bribery nor desire of the favour of any creature to bias him. The judgment of God is according to truth.—"For there is no respect of persons with God." Now men speak much against the hardness and severity of God's requirements; but the conscience of every one judged will in that day so accord with the sentence pronounced, that even the condemned shall be silent in their own behalf.

O my brethren, often realize the circumstances of that day! Let us place before our eyes that great event "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him," and dwell often in our thoughts and meditations on that period when "he shall sit on the the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." You and I shall be there, and the preaching and the hearing of this very sermon shall be one of those things which will then testify for or against us.

2. *The Judge seated on it.*

I saw him that sat upon it.

"Who is this King of Glory?" Who is this most worthy Judge eternal? It is our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures frequently speak of him as presiding over all the stupendous scenes of this day. Mark viii, 38; Matt. xxv, 31. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John v, 22. The throne of judgment is therefore called "the judgment-seat of Christ." Rom. xiv, 10; 2 Cor. v, 10. And he it is who shall be seated on this great white throne.

O how different from his first coming! Then he was shut out of human dwellings, born in a stable, a weak and helpless babe in his virgin mother's arms, cradled in a manger, subject to his parents, brought up as a carpenter, despised and rejected of men. Then he was a man of sorrows, not having where to lay his head. Then he was himself tried, judged, condemned, spit upon, nailed to a cross, crucified with thieves, and laid in the grave. This he submitted to, this he underwent for you, for me, that we might, through his sufferings for us, escape judgment, condemnation, shame, and everlasting contempt.

But now how changed! He appears infinitely more glorious by the contrast of that humiliation to which, in his love

and pity for man's redemption, he submitted. He now is manifested in his true and proper character, as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." His face shining as the sun; myriads of angels attending upon him, the whole universe waiting to hear the decisions of his lips, and that voice which is to fix forever the destiny of man.

O lover of Jesus! think of this, and take courage. That Being in whom thou hast trusted, whom thou hast made thy righteousness, whose Spirit thou hast received, who is thy Redeemer and thy Saviour; He, He is Judge of all the earth. Thou hast confessed Him here, He will confess thee there.

O despiser of Jesus! tremble and be alarmed. This is he whom thou art rejecting; this is he whom thou slightest. O agree with him quickly. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish by the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Ps. ii, 12.

3. *The effect of his appearance.*

From his face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.

There is a sublimity and awful magnificence in these ideas, that surpass our loftiest thoughts. O what will be the reality! The words show the entire dissolution of the present fabric of the world. In the language of St. Peter, it is "the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat —the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." For thousands of years this earth has been the abode of sinners. Every kingdom, every inheritance, every habitation, and every possession, is stained and dyed with sin; all below is contaminated and polluted with that which, in the sight of God, is more abominable than the plague or poison. How vile is sin, which pollutes all it touches!

But if the material world, in which men have sinned, be dissolved—if even the very garment spotted with the flesh must be destroyed, O where shall the sinner himself appear! What will become of the ungodly! My beloved brethren, these are the grand realities; all other concerns are trifles.

Alas! we spend our thoughts and cares on adorning our houses and filling them with goods, and beautifying and perfecting them; forgetting that the end of all things is at hand; forgetting that all that is beautiful, and even useful, shall be burnt up and consumed, in the great fire which shall destroy this earth, and all the things which are therein. Let us learn lessons of moderation and contentment, and never make this world our home and inheritance; but "use the world so as not abusing it, and make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations." Luke xvi, 9.

Such, my brethren, is the throne of judgment, the Judge seated upon it, and the effect of his appearance: the great realities which so deeply concern every one of us.

2. The Assembly gathered before the Judge.

The whole human race will then be gathered before Him. The dead, small and great. We may consider this assembly as consisting of the living and the dead.

1. Those *living* on the earth shall then be judged.

St. Paul says, on this head, "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible."

St. John does not in this passage, mention the living: it may be that he speaks of the dead, because of the apparent difficulty of their being raised and judged; if the dead of all ages would be judged, much more shall the living. Indeed, other passages of Scripture are clear on this point. St. Paul, speaking of what shall happen *as it regards Christians*, says, "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep.....The dead in Christ shall rise first,.....then we, which are alive and remain, shall be

caught up together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

As it regards the wicked also, millions will be living on the face of the earth, at the time of the general judgment. Satan will "deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth;" the number of the deceived will be incalculably great "as the sand of the sea." They will be as full of worldly schemes, and plans, and wickedness, as now; as full of enmity against God and his truth; and in a moment the last great fire shall "come down from God out of heaven," and kindle the tremendous flame which shall destroy this lower world.

O brethren, think of that day! Most likely the day of your death will find you as you are now; unless God, in his marvellous mercy, convert you. You have often thought of repenting, but have not yet repented; and of amending, but have not yet amended: and if it go on so—Oh, if death and judgment were now to burst on you, where would you be! would you be taken to heaven, or cast into that lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death? Are you ready and prepared for the coming of the Son of God?

2. Those numbered with the *dead* will then be collected and judged.

Our text expressly mentions, the dead small and great; "and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." We learn hence, that all classes of society appear in judgment: all places give up their dead.

Every class in society, whatever the age be, from the infant to the aged Methuselah; and every rank, from the beggar by the way-side to the mightiest monarch on his throne—without exception, all—shall appear in judgment: the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the wise and the unwise, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, without reserve, and without one exception, all shall be judged. The murderer and his victim, the oppressor and the oppressed, the master and the servant, shall face each other again, and all stand in one vast assembly, before the Holy Judge. Those distinctions which men have so eagerly thirsted after, will for ever vanish, or rather, if they have ministered to sin, will heighten and aggravate the woe of that day. The treasures which wicked men have amassed, in the thought that those riches would secure them against evil, become the very things which will add to their load of misery. Their "gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against them, and shall eat their flesh as it were fire. Their very pleasures have nourished their hearts as for a day of slaughter." O, brethren! whatever be your wishes, or your fears, or your terrors; whatever be your unbelief, or contempt, or neglect, there and then *you* must appear.

Then every *place* will give up its tenants. The *sea* in all its unfathomable depths, withholds not one of the dead. A whole world was once drowned, when upon "those disobedient, in the days of Noah, God brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly:" the armies of Pharaoh were swallowed up in those depths, they too shall reappear,—not as pursuing the terrified people of Israel, but as themselves under a more tremendous terror than when the waves rushed back upon them, and they were overwhelmed in the Red Sea. Yes, and all the countless multitudes that since have found a grave in the great deep, not one of them shall be wanting. *Death* too, however it may have taken its prey, in whatever varied forms it may have come on the sons of men, shall give up its captives. *Hell*, also, the place of departed spirits, shall no longer detain its imprisoned tenants. Re-united to their bodies, the whole man, body and soul, shall be brought together to judgment.

See the vast assembly! it is not one country, but every country: it is not one generation, but every generation: it is not the eight hundred millions now living on earth, but the millions of millions that have existed from the first Adam, to the last born of the human race. They are all gathered. They all stand before the great white throne. Methinks they wait, in solemn pause, the movements of the great Judge! What a scene will then be unfolded, in which you and I shall not

be spectators only, but parties deeply concerned.

O sinners, unconverted, worldly, careless sinners, what will be your state then? All your high looks will be for ever abased; all your hard speeches against God's truth for ever silenced; all your careless indifference for ever removed. All your worldly successes and advantages, instead of being your glory and your security, are your distress and your everlasting shame. O what would you in that day give for the time which you now have! Sinners on a death bed cry out for a day more, for an hour more, that they may have time to repent, and attend to the one thing needful—their salvation: what will their desire be, for a day, or an hour, when all that they feared is come upon them; "when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind." You, my brethren, have that time now; use it so now as in the great day of judgment, you will wish that you had done.

O you who trust in Christ, and love him; this will be the great day of your joy and triumph; this the day that will complete your happiness. The Judge is your friend; all that troubled you will be for ever done away. You shall enter the joy of your Lord.

O my beloved people, let me entreat you, as your real friend: let me beseech you, as one who must himself give account of every sermon he preaches: let me entreat you, as one earnestly longing over you in the bowels of Jesus Christ, to join without delay the despised flock of Christ—to sacrifice every thing, rather than your soul's salvation.

SERMON VIII.

THE JUDGMENT DAY.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.—*Rev. xx*, 11—13.

From these striking words we proposed to point your attention to four things. 1. The Judge upon the throne; 2. The assembly gathered before him; 3. The opening of the books; and 4. The judgment itself. We entered into the two former heads. Under the Judge on the throne, we dwelt on the throne of judgment, the judge seated on it, and the effect of his appearance; in reference to the assembly gathered before him, we viewed them under the two aspects of the living and the dead.

We left off at this point, the assembled world gathered before the great Judge of quick and dead, and waiting his decision. Now let us consider,

3. The opening of the books, and

4. The judgment itself.

The proceedings of that great day will commence with

3. The opening of the books.

And the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life.

You may remark that there are books in general, and a particular book.

There are *Books in general.* The expression is figurative, denoting the accurate register of all our talents and opportunities, and of all our thoughts, and words, and works. But let us endeavour to illustrate this statement.

There is the *Book of God's Holy Law.* This which contains the rule of judgment, it may be presumed will be first opened. It has been already laid before men. Its main directions are to love "the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and to love thy neighbour as thyself;" but it calls for perfect and entire obedience, without one omission; "whosoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James ii, 10. A perfect pattern of obedience was given in the life of Christ, and the law is so just and reasonable, its requirements are so clearly our duty, and tend so to pro-

mote our happiness, that disobedience is without excuse. If we say that we are unable to keep it, that very plea is our condemnation. Unable supremely to love thy Creator, thy chief benefactor, unable to love thy neighbour as thyself! O how great thy sinfulness! how utterly indefensible that plea! How self-condemnatory that excuse!

There is then the book of *Providence.* This comprehends the various talents entrusted to us, of whatever kind; whether ability or understanding, or wealth of substance, or influence of condition, or strength of body. It includes all the advantages which we have enjoyed from our earliest years: our birth, our baptism, our education in a Christian country, and the knowledge imparted and stored up for future usefulness in life: the Christian friends who counselled us, the sermons and the sacraments of the church. The book of Providence records all the opportunities which we have had, whether improved or neglected: and all the seasons in which we might have prayed and read the Scriptures. It then marks down the patience, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God, his waiting long for our repentance, and the various affecting calls and awakening incidents, the sudden deaths, the touching sermons, the afflictions and losses, and every thing else that God in his goodness designed and sent, to lead you to repentance: and the way in which these have been met by you. O how will you be astonished at your unconcern and hardness of heart, amidst so many things to rouse and awaken you!

In the book of *Satan's accusations*, behold another fearful register! He is always, by his innumerable agents of evil, present with men, and noting down their doings. There is no place so secret, but he can be there—no work of darkness so hidden, but he, with malignant joy, can observe it, and takes account of it. You may have long ago forgotten; he never forgets. His name is adversary, his office is "the accuser of the brethren, which accused them before our God day and night." Rev. xii, 10. He will enumerate the sins to which he seduced and tempted you, and every aggravating circumstance of each, of all: and O what an unexpected, what a lengthened catalogue will he have to produce!

The *book of Conscience* will also be there. Conscience now soon loses sight of what is past; it is also apt to slumber and to become blinded and seared by custom in sinning. But the great and terrible scenes of the day of judgment will effectually awaken conscience. Times of alarm have often this effect, even in this world. When Joseph's brethren fell into trouble, their conscience, which, as far as appears, had slept for many years, was suddenly roused, their sale of their brother to be a slave rose up afresh in all the horrors of a guilty conscience; and, when nothing seemed to lead them to it, "they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us." The book of conscience does now record all those secret sins which you may have securely kept from all your fellow-creatures; every secret impurity, every hidden work of dishonesty, and every slander meditated or uttered in private; but the writing is like that which remains invisible till it be brought to something that discovers it; the day of judgment will exhibit legibly all the secret records, and your own eyes will be enlightened clearly and fully to behold all your life distinctly. If now even the enlightened conscience of the believer testifies in his heart, mine iniquities "are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me," (Ps. xl, 12,) what an accumulated multitude of sins will conscience in that day unveil!

Another book is that of *human testimony:* and this either that of good men or of bad. Good men must be witnesses in that day against those whom they counselled, instructed, and warned in vain. Enoch and Noah will have to testify against the ungodly world before the flood: Lot against the wicked men of Sodom: Elijah and Micaiah against Ahab: and all the faithful ministers of Christ will have to give testimony how their message was received, and of some, alas, they must "give account with grief,

and not with joy." On the other hand, there will be the mutual accusations of sinners against sinners: of companions and associates against each other. This is also a tremendous book. The wicked father accuses the wicked son, and the son recriminates against his father: the wicked husband testifies against the wicked wife, and the wife against the husband: the wicked master against the wicked servant, and the servant against the master. And their testimony embraces all injuries received, all duties neglected, all the want of religion in the family, all neglect of God in the house, and in the daily occupations. Indeed every part of the earth will have a testimony respecting us. Do not such places, such houses, such rooms as have been the scenes of sin, recall the sin to your mind. In the language of Scripture, "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."

One more book, comprehending more than all others, shall be added, the book of *God's Perfect Knowledge.* The omniscient eye of God has seen the whole of man. His knowledge is perfect. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv, 13. No darkness hides from his eye to whom "the darkness and the light are both alike." Ps. cxxxix. 12. All the inward parts of men, their thoughts, motives, and dispositions, as well as the outward effect in their words, and writings, and works, are recorded in this book. Nothing is forgotten, nothing overlooked, nothing screened, but as in the blaze of noon-day, all is manifest and clear.

For these books are to be *opened*—to be laid open—to be visibly unfolded, that the equity of the Divine judgment may be universally cleared, and without exception acknowledged and confessed. O what should we now think, to have every secret sin blazoned abroad among all around us! The opening of these books is but the illustration of what our Lord says, "Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, neither any thing hid that shall not be known and come abroad." Luke viii, 17.

But do we not shut out all hope? In this way shall not all perish? If, indeed, these books were all, we might despair; but, blessed be God, another book is produced at that day.

We notice then, in the next place, a *particular book*—the book of life—in which book, if the name of any one be inscribed, he is not condemned, but is accepted.

There is a frequent allusion to this particular book in the preceding chapters. The Saviour promises, "to him that overcometh, I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." Rev. iii, 5. He shows that all shall worship the beast, "whose names are not written in the book of life,—of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. xiii, 8; xvii, 8.

The figure seems taken from the list of freemen of a city. There is a list of freemen belonging to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Their salvation has been decreed from eternity; they were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." In the fulness of time God called them to himself, outwardly by his word, and inwardly by his Spirit: their names are on the Redeemer's Roll, and they have subscribed with their hands to the Lord. They have ventured their souls on the merits of Jesus; they are freely justified by his grace, and have received his Spirit, and brought forth that fruit of good living, which distinguishes those who belong to Christ.

If their sins be written against them in other books, in this book they are all struck through with the mark of the Redeemer's blood. They are blotted out, according to that gracious promise, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins;" (Isa. xliii, 25,) and on the other hand, to them in the language of St. Paul, "God imputeth righteousness without works."

Yet even those, whose names are in the book of life, are judged according to their works; for all are judged—"every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Every man's work shall be manifest, for the day shall declare it."

1 Cor. iii, 13. Their judgment is necessary, for two reasons; that the divine justice and equity in the discrimination made between them and the wicked, may be clearly seen, and that the proportion of their reward may be fixed.—Though saved by grace, there are yet different degrees of glory according to our fruitfulness in good works, for "he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." But here is the blessedness of the Book of life—it furnishes a plea to answer the various charges which lie against us—it records, as its first name, if I may so say, that Prince of Life, the Head of his people, who bore their sins in his own body on the tree; and by whose obedience they are accounted righteous; who is the second Adam, through whose righteousness "the free gift comes upon all" who believe in him "unto justification of life. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. xv, 22.

Brethren, you may then believe in Jesus, and live to him, and so shall it be manifest that your names are inscribed in the book of life.

Think, we beseech you, think again and again, what you can possibly answer to all the charges written in God's book against you; apply to the Lord Jesus without delay, and never cease calling upon him for salvation; continue to ask, to seek and to knock, so shall you obtain satisfaction, on just grounds, through the manifest work of the Spirit on your hearts and in your lives, that your sins are all blotted out, and will be no more remembered against you, that you are clothed with that righteousness in which alone you can be accepted, and which is "unto, and upon all them that believe," and are made meet for the heavenly inheritance.

4. The judgment itself.

The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, every man according to their works.

Notice its comprehensiveness, its condemnation, its justification.

Its *Comprehensiveness* is universal. It is not only a judgment for all men, but for all works also. If every man is judged according to his works, as stated in our text, then not only "must we all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," but also all be judged for all our works; so the Scriptures plainly state, "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good or evil." Eccles. xii, 14. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. xii, 36. The whole of life as recorded in the books which have been mentioned will be brought under review, our thoughts and words and works, our relative duties, our tempers, our daily conduct. And let the self-righteous remember that, if they rest on their own obedience, one single sin will condemn them. James ii, 10.

O fearful scrutiny! Sinners how will ye appear! Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God! You "cannot answer him one of a thousand" of the charges brought against you. Think of this, ere it be too late, and seek the true refuge.

The *Condemnation* of that day.

All who have not fled for refuge to Christ Jesus, and have no meetness for the heavenly inheritance, must evidently, and without remedy be condemned. "There is none other name under heaven given whereby we must be saved,"—and they have rejected that only name. See the wicked then clearly and fully manifested to be wicked. See them without excuse, speechless before the throne. Now they begin to feel the force of that question they should have before considered, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

It is a fearful thing to see a criminal at an earthly tribunal tried for his life and condemned to death; to mark his pale face, his quivering lips, and his trembling limbs, and to hear the judge pronounce the awful penalty; but all this is temporary and unimportant compared with this everlasting condemnation. The words of the Judge are full of terror, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25. And the execution of the sentence immediately follows, "whosoever was not found written in the book of life

was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. xx, 15.

O dread above every thing this condemnation! Fear nothing compared with this! Suffer any thing rather than undergo this! It comprehends all other evils, and with the tremendous addition that it is at once evil without measure, or mixture, or end!

The *Justification* of that day.

There are those accepted and justified in that great day. Owned as altogether righteous, not a sin laid to their charge. They are placed on the right hand, and hear the words, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And thus they are perfectly, unchangeably, and eternally blessed.

But what is the ground of their justication? How are they thus passed from death to life; in what way is it possible for any sinful human being then to be justified with such books opened, and by such an omniscient and righteous Judge?

We have told you of the book of life; but let us more distinctly show the way of justification.

Tried by the law of God, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. But God has devised a wonderful scheme of justice and mercy. "The righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. iii, 22, 23. This way of salvation through faith in Jesus, God sends his ministers to proclaim. Men by nature wrapped up in unbelief, and worldliness, and love of sin, disregard, slight, and neglect this proclamation of grace.

But God's purposes of mercy are not incomplete, and therefore shall not be frustrated. He has a chosen people, who are made willing in the day of his power. To them he gives so largely of his blessed Spirit that they listen to his invitations, they believe his promises, they trust in the Lord Jesus, and they obtain the righteousness of God which is by faith. Then the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, and filled with love and gratitude, they devote themselves, and all they have to God their Saviour, and their works of love prove their faith to be genuine, and manifest their character to be sincere.

Now to such there is a perfect deliverance from condemnation. There is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." In the words of our Lord, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." And as there is a deliverance from condemnation, so there is a complete justification in the sight of the whole world. The assembled universe may be challenged with the triumphant question, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth." Rom. viii, 33. Clothed with the perfect righteousness of the Divine Redeemer, all the malignity and subtilty of Satan cannot lay one sin against them, or discover one defect in that glorious robe.

O my brethren that you may be numbered among them! This is the end of all my labours among you, this my heart's desire and prayer for you. You hear the invitations of the Gospel; you have the outward call of the word of God. O that you may be inwardly touched and called by the Divine Spirit; may lay these things seriously to heart, and determine to lose every thing rather than your soul, to do, to suffer every thing rather than endanger your acceptance at the last.

Ever *remember this great account* that you must one day give at the judgment seat of Christ, that every hour as it passes along tends to fix the character of your final and eternal condition. Often ask yourselves, how will this appear in the great day of account and retribution; is my course such as in the great, the last judgment will be approved.

Let every one truly *repent of sin.* This is St. Paul's practical application of this doctrine. "God commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." Acts xvii, 30, 31. "Except ye repent, ye shall all

perish." Let us then often try our ways and judge ourselves before that day arrive. So judging ourselves we should escape being judged of the Lord. "Repent, then, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Give up all sinful courses; turn you every one from his evil ways.

Let the Christian, however, look at this day, not with dread, but with believing hope—not with distrust, but with cheering expectation. Brethren, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. To them that look for him, he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The self righteous and the unconverted may regard this as a day of error; the believer should not do so, but rather "joyful through hope and rooted in charity," may anticipate this, as the day which will consummate his blessedness, end the course of all sin, restrain every iniquity in the prison of hell, and begin the unmingled reign and triumph of peace, and holiness, and happiness. O joyful day when Christ "shall appear and we shall appear with him in glory!" O happy season which shall for ever terminate darkness, and sin, and sorrow, and land us in his presence, and kingdom, and in whose "presence is fulness of joy!" The Christian may bless God that it will soon arrive. To him it is a joyful sound that his Lord says, "Surely I come quickly," and his heart replies, Amen! "even so, come, Lord Jesus."

My brethren, I long that you should all be thus blessed. Why should you not? Are the pleasures of sin for a little season, so precious as to recompense the loss of all this joy? O surely, it is not so. Then from henceforth be in earnest —make sure this one point, *salvation*.

SERMON IX.

ETERNITY.

"We look not at things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.—2 *Cor.* iv, 18.

The subject of eternity is one of those depths that are unfathomable by the human mind. At first view, it may seem easy to imagine a never-ending state of existence. This general notion is obvious: not so the realizing view that shall comprehend with any distinctness its boundless extent, and its unutterable magnitude. With the astonishment of a new and before imperfectly apprehended subject of stupendous import, it will probably break after death, upon the minds of the most prepared; and were death now to call others into its dark abode, and their spirits now to enter on the eternal scenes beyond it, to which they are hastening, O their alarm and consternation, as they saw the temporary good of this world vanishing, and with it the hope of heaven's eternal glory!

All have a general idea of eternity; what we all want is a more believing and realizing view of it. To die daily, to contemplate eternity daily, to live as strangers and pilgrims here, O how difficult! Your minister feels the difficulty. May the Divine Spirit help him at this time, to open this subject to our mutual profit! May the words of the text be true of you and of me, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Let us consider,

1. The things seen,
2. The things not seen,
3. Eternity,
4. Our duty,
5. The preciousness of Christ.

1. The things seen.

The things which are seen are temporal.

We will notice,

The objects intended, and their transitory nature.

1. *The Objects intended.* The things seen.

Not merely what is seen with the eye, but all that relates merely to this visible world. All that is in the world, all that it can do, either to hurt us, or to comfort us; or, to use the expression of Solomon, "All the works that are done under the sun." Eccles. i, 14. The varied pleas-

ures of this world, which delight the heart, and fill it with mirth and gladness; its accumulated wealth placing the possessor in independence of his fellow-creatures, or its honours making him the object of esteem and general commendation, so that all speak well of him,—these are among the things seen. All the pursuits and labours which engage us day by day, of which Solomon says, "I looked on all the works my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do,"—these are things seen. Every intellectual improvement, the stores of human learning and wisdom, the knowledge of arts and science, trade and business, however valuable for this world,—they are also here included. Whatever is the object of sight and sense, and whatever the carnal mind desires for its present happiness, comes under this description. Then again all that distresses the mind, as it regards these things, all sorrows and afflictions, losses and trials, however acutely we may feel them; or joys and prosperity, gains and blessings, however assured to us, are not to be omitted. In short, all the concerns and events of human life, the schemes of politicians, the revolutions of empires, the forms of government, the enterprises of merchants, the construction and government of cities and countries, the progress of science, the ordinary pursuits and speculations of trade, these are what we mean by the things seen. Nor, however necessary they may be for the present life, can they be looked at as things of main importance to an immortal being like man.

2. *Their transitory nature.* They are temporal.

They are all for a season. However great or glorious, or necessary or profitable, there is one stamp upon all—they are for a time only—soon they come to an end.

The monarch, surrounded with his court, environed with his guards, or shielded by the love of his people, must lay aside his crown, and give up his kingdom. The learned, with all the stores of the wisdom of ages, cannot ward off the stroke which will send him to a country where learning, (apart from that which makes men wise to salvation,) avails nothing. The sensualist, who takes the utmost pains to delight and gratify a pampered body, must soon leave that body in the grave the prey of the worms. The ambitious, who has made all obstacles yield to his advancement, and had many dependent on him, must speedily enter alone, without one dependent, the eternal world.

Whatever good things we may, by wisdom and prudence, by art or contrivance, have gathered around us, if they be only this world's goods, we must soon part with all. Whatever evil things we may be burdened by, if we are Christians, those evils will soon pass away, and be felt no more. The most comfortable dwelling that we can make for ourselves, is but a tent for a short stay, and not our real home; the most profitable business we can be engaged in, is but as a provision for a short journey; the best situation we can have in this world, is a mere seat in a pilgrimage.

Suppose a ship at sea has a dangerous leak, from which, as all the sailors know, the vessel must in a few hours sink in the great deep; suppose a passenger to be so absurd as to spend all the time that remains in hanging his cabin with pictures, painting, beautifying and adorning every part, and thinking of nothing but how his cabin shall be most admired by his fellow-passengers, though the ship was filling with water, though the waves swept away one of the company after another, and at length entered his cabin: suppose he stopped not in his folly till he himself sunk with the vessel: you can see the madness of this: but suppose the greater part of the crew were pursuing the same sort of conduct, some in one way and some in another, but all regardless of the coming shipwreck, you justly say, it is incredible, such a thing never happened.

Look abroad in the world, what are men doing? They are painting the cabin while the ship is sinking. Look into your own life,—what is it? The wisest plan, that ends merely in this world's glory, is like some petty ornament put in the cabin of a sinking vessel. Nor is this all. Sin carries a sting beyond the grave.

A satisfied lust in time, is the hell of eternity. "Thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented."

O my brethren, I feel myself the lethargic, the palsying, the deadening effect of this world's good, and long therefore to rouse myself, as well as to awaken you. It is affecting to see how naturally we all tend to fill and satisfy our souls with the poor dirt of the perishing things of this world, instead of rising on eagles' wings to the ennobling and sublime things of eternity; but death is coming, and it will show us what is temporal, and what is eternal, in a way beyond deception. It will strip us bare of all temporal things. It will pull off from us friends and relations, revenues and titles, honours and riches, and pleasures. Things but of one character will follow us to another world, even those "things which are not seen, and are eternal.

2. The things not seen.

The things which are not seen are eternal.

Here also we will consider the objects intended, and their enduring character.

1. *The Objects intended.*

Things which are not seen.

The Apostle means all those spiritual things with which, as immortal beings, we are chiefly concerned.

The God with whom we have to do; in whom we live, move, and have our being: who is a Spirit, and whom no human eye has seen. Yet he is about our path and about our bed, and spies out all our ways; his judgment of us is to us every thing—his favour better than life, and his frown worse than death. His being and existence, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons in one God, is one of those great realities that are not seen.

The angelic hosts that surround his throne and fly to execute his errands, who are ministering spirits ministering to the heirs of salvation, and our future companions in the glory above, also are among the great realities not seen by the eye of flesh.

Again, the accursed angels, with their apostate chief who "goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," and who works in the children of disobedience, however much the wicked may ridicule his fearful power, and deny his very existence, yet the Bible account is true; he does exist, and his existence and of legions under him, are among those realities, which, though not seen, have the existence and fatal influence which the Bible ascribes to them.

The soul of man, as distinct from the body, is spiritual and immaterial, and therefore invisible. Man *sees* the body and can kill the body; the soul he sees not, it is beyond his reach, impervious to all external attack, and imperishable.

All that relates to this immortal soul, those graces and dispositions which are the fruits of the Divine Spirit, the work of faith, the patience of hope and labour of love, in which grace enables the Christian to abound, though man sees not the secret principles, God does, and they survive the death of the body, and are like seed that grows and flourishes in the harvest of futurity. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them."

And on the other hand all those sins in which the wicked delight, follow them also as a seed of a miserable futurity. Much would they wish to be free from the recollection; but the sin of lying follows the liar, and the sin of thieving follows the thief, and add to the bitter anguish of their ruin.

But more especially the great realities of hell and heaven—the regions of future woe—the realms of endless bliss—the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; and the paradise of eternal joy and glory—where is "the pure river of water of life clear as crystal"—and the "tree of life and the throne of God and the Lamb, and no more curse, and fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore," these are "the things not seen" on which our eyes should be fixed. For mark—

2. *Their enduring character.*

They are eternal.

What an authoritative stamp is here! A piece of paper may be of little worth in itself, but let the paper have the signature and the stamp of the Bank of

England, and it may be worth thousands or millions of property. Now there is this stamp of eternity put on all the things not seen which we have brought before you; and this gives them an importance that language fails to express.

God is the eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise God. He is properly "from everlasting to everlasting," without beginning as well as without end. Angels and fallen spirits and human beings have had a beginning, but they have no end of their existence, and their varied works effect their eternal condition, evil works terminating in endless woe, and good works in future and eternal bliss.

Not to enter however too largely on these things, mark only the eternity of the regions of future woe and bliss.

The unseen regions of future woe have the stamp of eternity upon them; this is their peculiar characteristic. Under whatever term you find these miserable regions mentioned in the Scripture, a note of eternity is in some part or other affixed to the description. It is called by that most fearful of all terms,—"the wrath of God; (Eph. v, 6,) but then it has this tremendous addition, it is called an abiding wrath, and the wrath to come. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, (John iii, 36,): flee from the wrath to come." It is compared to a worm feeding on us, the perpetual gnawing of a guilty conscience; but then it is a "worm that never dies." Mark ix, 44. It is at other times described as a fire (Isa. lxvi, 34,) a furnace of fire, (Matt. xiii, 42,) a lake of fire, (Rev. xix, 20,) but it is a "fire that never shall be quenched," (Mark ix, 44,) and is called "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Matt. xxv, 41. Or, if it be named as "a prison," (1 Pet. iii, 19,) it is a prison from which men never go out; (Matt. v, 25, 26,) or as darkness, but it is "the blackness of darkness for ever," (Jude 13,) reserved for the ungodly. The burning (Isa. xxx, 34,) is "everlasting burnings." Isa. xxxiii, 14. The torment is an everlasting torment: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Rev. xx, 10. It is not to me pleasant to speak, nor to you pleasant to hear these things; but I must be faithful, and happy are you if by hearing them you are so warned as for ever to escape them.

On the other hand the unseen realms of future bliss have under their varied descriptions, always attached to them the same mark of eternity. If heaven be described as a kingdom, (Matt. v, 3,) it is also styled an "everlasting kingdom." 2 Peter i, 11. If it be a crown, it is a "crown that fadeth not away," (1 Peter v, 4,) or glory, (Rom. v, 1,) it is "eternal glory;" (1 Peter v, 10,) or an inheritance, it is "incorruptible" as well as "undefiled;" (1 Peter i, 4,) or a house, it is a "house eternal in the heavens;" (2 Cor. v, 1,) or salvation, it is "eternal salvation;" (Heb. v, 9,) or life, it is "life everlasting." John iii, 16.

But I pause in my description: and before I conclude, would address your consciences.

My brethren, you stand on the margin of eternal things; the immense ocean of eternity is stretched out before you, you must soon embark upon it. Time, how short! life, what a vapour! "As for man his days are as grass, as a flower of the field so he flourisheth; the wind passeth over it and it is gone"—he may die in a thousand different ways each hour. Any thing is strong enough when commissioned by your God to bring you to death, and launch you on this boundless sea of eternity. Here is one striking character of death; it lifts up the hangings that hide eternity, and it shows us the reality of what we now see not: death is in this view the entrance upon eternity.

On your life then, thus uncertain, depends a happy or miserable eternity. I appeal to your understanding as men, to your conscience as accountable beings, to your reason as reasonable beings,—follow your true interests. Shall the tenant at will thus needlessly provoke and offend to the uttermost that landlord on whom he is wholly dependent? Shall the sailor on the mast-top, fall asleep while the stormy ocean tosses the vessel to and fro with its swelling waves? then much less should we on the brink of

eternity offend our God, and be unconcerned about our souls.

O never forget there are multitudes that shall everlastingly perish. Your Saviour has declared it in the plainest terms: "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." Remember the possibility of being deceived —"there is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. xvi, 25. And O, if deceived, how fatal is the mistake! how terrible the reflection—I looked for heaven, and behold I am lost, for ever lost in hell!

Improve, then, to the uttermost, all the means which God has bestowed for your conviction and conversion:—the word of truth, constant prayer, self-examination, and weekly sabbaths. O rest not till you see your interests for eternity clearly and surely established. This is, this must be true wisdom. That is not wisdom which regards merely things seen. The rich man in the parable whose lands brought forth abundantly, was wise enough as to this world; he laid his plans judiciously in earthly things —but the Bible says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

What is called wisdom in this world, at the best is but the wisdom of one who spends all in providing so well for his journey to a distant country, where he has to live the rest of his days, that he arrives a bankrupt at the journey's end. Often ask yourselves, Am I provided for eternity? What treasures have I for that heavenly country?' Let us not live in waste here, and starve for ever. Most men are occupied in thinking how they shall live *in* the world; it should be, how they shall live *out of it*, in eternity.

O how Satan the great deceiver imposes on men; they take a pebble for a pearl, they prefer a flint to a diamond, they choose time before eternity, and strut about in the momentary delusion, as if adorned with real wealth and glory.

But, my beloved brethren in Christ, let the consideration that eternity is at hand, calm your mind and remove all your anxieties about this world. The only material question, Where shall I lean my head, and lodge my soul, and find my home *for ever?* is to you satisfactorily answered: "The Lord is the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever."

SERMON X.

ETERNITY.

We look not at things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal.—2 *Cor. iv*, 18.

We proposed to consider, 1. The things seen. 2. The things not seen. 3. Eternity. 4. Our duty. 5. The preciousness of Christ. We have considered the two former heads, pointing out under each head the objects intended, and the character of those objects. There remains to consider,

3. Eternity,
4. Our duty regarding it,
5. The preciousness of Christ.

3. *The Nature of Eternity.*

Here is our great difficulty. We can only describe it according to our present very limited and imperfect views, and can rather say what it is not, than what it is. For instance,

It surpasses all description. Human language fails utterly to convey the full notion of eternity. Whatever is spoken of it, is far less than it is. Thus we talk of the ages of eternity, but there are properly no such æras, as ages in an eternal existence; we talk of thousands of years passed in eternity, but there are no years to mark the parts of a never-ending state.

It transcends human understanding. It cannot be weighed; for what can be placed in the opposite scale of the balance against eternity? It cannot be measured. There is some proportion between a second of time and millions of years; but what shall measure eternity. Our thoughts are vast and boundless; they can imagine worlds upon worlds, filled with happy beings, peopling unknown regions of the immeasurable

universe; but our thoughts themselves are baffled and staggered; they become confounded and darkened, when they attempt to measure eternity.

It is being without end. Nothing shall put an end to our existence. God, who can, will not. His word cannot pass away; and in every threatening of eternal woe, in every promise of eternal bliss,—that word, on which the whole creation is suspended, is pledged for our endless existence. Man cannot destroy his own life there, or that of his fellow-creatures. Nor is there change or return; when once we are launched on that ocean, we can never begin again, never return to re-act life.

Eternity is existence going on without diminution. There is no spending or wasting of eternity. In this life, every day and every hour shortens it; we have less to live from having lived so long: but it is not so in eternity, which is not marked by days and years. Millions of what we now call years and ages shall pass, and yet none of eternity shall be diminished; it shall make no difference in the immeasurable length which is yet to come. The sorrows of the lost will still be to come—an everlasting night overshadows them. The joys of the saved will still be to come—an everlasting morning refreshes them.

Once more, *all comparisons fall short* of a true resemblance. You may conceive of this place of worship full of grains of sand, and one grain taken away in a million of years, and the space of time this would require! We may conceive the whole earth as one vast globe of sand, and one grain taken away in a million of years, and the extent of ages this would require! We may conceive the vast ocean, in all its extent and depth, and the removal of a drop each million of years, and the space this would take! You may put all these together, and accumulate them again and again; but, after reaching the utmost stretch of comparison, you are hardly beginning eternity, and are not at all nearer its termination: for eternity is an ocean without a bottom and without a shore. O then think, we beseech you, think often, deeply, and most seriously of eternity! Can it be, that one who is to dwell in it has never thought of it with any earnestness? We entreat you meditate much on *eternity.*

4. *Our duty with regard to eternity.* *Look not at things seen—Look at things not seen.* There is apparently a contradiction in these directions. How can I not look at the things which I see? how can I look at things which I cannot see? There is an eye, however, that can make worldly things disappear, and see him that is invisible, and behold and steadfastly gaze upon spiritual and eternal things—we mean the eye of faith.

This duty concerns the view we should take of things temporal and things eternal—not to look at the one, and to look at the other.

As to *things temporal*, look not so at them as to set your affections upon them, or to esteem them beyond their just value. Make them not your treasure. Let not your reward be upon earth.

If you lose them, be not anxious or distressed at the loss. The Apostle says, "We are troubled on every side, but not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.....The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii, 29—31. This is the spirit in which we should view this world. Let eternity, with its infinitely more important concerns, keep us from giving too much time to earthly objects, being too anxious in the pursuit of them, or too overjoyed in the possession of them, or any thing like the vain thought, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years."

All earthly things should be regarded by us, not for what they are in themselves, but as they are a help or hindrance to our happiness in eternity. If we view them through the medium of an

eternal state, we shall then see them in their just proportions.

As to eternal things.

Look at them, so as *duly to estimate them.* Calculate, if you can, what is included in the immortality of the soul: weigh the whole world against it, and it outweighs it all; "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Who can tell all the woe of having an immortal soul lost? Estimate again the eternity of God. Is there any end of his power and wisdom, of his holiness and truth, of his grace and love, of his possessions and dominions? Oh, to have this eternal God for your everlasting enemy, what an overwhelming evil! Oh to have Him for your everlasting friend, what an unspeakable good! Or estimate the ruin of an eternity of future woe. Eternity is the hell of hell, and the horror of the lost. You complain of the various ills of life, you groan under its pains, you are distracted by its sufferings; and trying enough are the varied afflictions and troubles of this world: but these are all sent in a plan of mercy—they are common to God's children; they are all partial and mitigated evils; they come not together; they continue not long. What will it be to have the whole body and the whole soul tormented in unabating anguish forever and ever! Or, once more, estimate the exceeding and eternal weight of glory: eternity is the heaven of heaven, and the joy of the saved—to be happy for ever. O calculate this in its length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and all other things, in comparison, will sink into insignificance and nothingness.

Look at eternal things, so as *earnestly to follow your high prize.* The apostle accounted all but loss for this. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before—I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. What have you to fly from? A destruction worse than that of the burning cities of the plain. *Escape then, for thy life!* What have you to obtain? Every thing that is excellent and glorious, and that forever. O, then, bend your whole powers to this point—to secure eternal life and glory!

How may this be done, consider, lastly,

5. The preciousness of Christ.

It is only in the glass of eternity that we can properly estimate the unspeakable value of a Saviour, and may it please our God so to enable me to set forth this value, that all your hearts may be drawn to him!

My brethren, all have sinned. The wages of sin is death, death eternal. God is holy, and God is true. His word cannot fail. He is just, and cannot acquit the guilty. Here is your state. You are sinful; you are on the very brink of eternity, and that eternity is a never-ceasing flow of wretchedness to the sinful. You are lost then; you are lost for ever without Christ. There is not a ray of hope from any other quarter.

But in Christ Jesus the gloom is dissipated; that Sun of Righteousness, with cheering beams, sheds light and life, joy and peace, and the full assurance of hope all around. He came, he lived, he died; he rose again, and thus completed our redemption, delivering us from the sentence of the law, the penalty of death, and the prison of hell, and obtaining for us the Holy Spirit, free justification, the adoption of sons, the gift of holiness, and the hope of glory. "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

We have then the word of him who inhabiteth eternity, who is from everlasting to everlasting, who is the God and Father of all for ever and ever, that in Christ Jesus there is a security for eternity. There is a solid basis on which you may fix your foot and say, "*I shall not be moved.*" Take then, I beseech you, your stand on the rock of ages. "Win Christ and be found in him," and you shall not "perish, but have everlasting life."

Oh! if you have right views of eternity, how will you value Christ? How does the shipwrecked sailor, clinging with a last grasp to the wreck of the sinking vessel, value the life-boat which pushes through the opposing waves, reaches him

in his danger, and rescues him from destruction! How does the inmate of the burning dwelling, surrounded with devouring flames, feel towards him who, at the risk of his own life, breaks through all difficulties, seizes him in his arms, and brings him to safety! And shall not we value that Saviour who, at so great a cost, rescues us from an infinitely greater danger, and brings us to an infinitely higher and fuller blessedness?

The cities of refuge were places of safety for the manslayer, and surely as they ran for their lives, the very sight of the distant towers and walls animated their steps, and they never rested till they reached and entered the place of security. Let us too fly for refuge to the hope set before us in Christ Jesus.

Imagine the feelings of Noah in the ark; when the heavens gathered black with clouds, and all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth, covering the highest mountains, and he found his prepared ark safely bearing him up over the universal deluge! Did he not value this ark? Was it not precious to him? and shall not Christ be precious, who shelters us from a more tremendous deluge, and carries us in safety from a world of sin, to a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness. If you know your danger, if you know your refuge, here indeed will be that invaluable good to obtain which you will gladly part with all things else. "To you which believe, he is precious."

O come to the Saviour; I fail in my whole ministry if I gain not this point, to lead you in secret retirement, in holy determination of will, in sweet reliance of mind, in ardent affection of heart, to venture your everlasting interests on Christ Jesus, and to make Him your righteousness, and Him your strength.

O thou eternal Father, draw by thy Spirit the sinner's heart to Christ! Thy Son hath said, "No man cometh to me except the Father draw him." O send now thy Holy Spirit, and let this be the day of thy power: and now may some poor sinners here be made willing to come to thee!

Suffer me to plead with you, yet further, by adding some practical directions arising out of this subject.

Every day *prepare for eternity.* This is the great concern of life. Say not you are so busy, you have no time. By this you only show your unbelief and ignorance. What business is so great as that it may set aside concerns for your salvation? why was life given you? that you might secure a blissful eternity. For this you were sent here. For this, all time is allowed you, and God spares you from day to day. O then neglect not this one great business of life. Remember as you go out of time, so you enter, and so you continue in eternity. "Whatever then, thy hand findeth to do," in this great work of thy salvation, "do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Day by day then renew your faith and repentance, and live each day as if the last. One of old had proclaimed daily in his ears, "Remember thou art mortal;" but let it rather ever sound in your ears, Remember thou art immortal, and immortal either in woe or bliss, according as thou art saved or lost. O then "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," for you have a mighty helper, even God himself, who "worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Abide always in Christ Jesus. This is one of his last directions to his disciples. "Abide in me." This is the only ark in which a sinner can safely and securely pass over the universal ocean of a vast eternity. O my brethren, enter without delay this ark, I beseech you. God grant I may not beseech you in vain. Noah was a preacher of righteousness; he preached to a whole world, and but eight souls entered into the ark. My brethren, be warned by all the past history of the Church. You know you must pass into the eternal world. The time is rapidly approaching, here you have no continuing city; you must soon be removed, and the earth itself be removed; there is however a rock in this world which is immoveable in eternity itself, even Christ Jesus. O that I could

see you all safely fixed on that rock, believing in Jesus and abiding in Him! Then let the heavens and the earth pass away, let the "hills be removed, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea;" you need fear nothing, but exclaim in triumph, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Learn on earth *the blessed employment of eternity.* You must here be made meet for its holy occupations: to enjoy God as your portion and happiness, to do his will only, to praise him unceasingly, and to seek only his glory.

I add one more direction. Seek also to *rescue your fellow mortals* from eternal ruin. The world accuses Christians of being too busy with other people's religion, and scornfully asks "cannot you let people alone?" I would that the world's accusations were just. Let people alone! yes, let the sleeper in the burning house sleep on till the flames awake him, though you see his danger! Let the drowning man, becoming insensible in the water, sink, and never reach out a hand to draw him to the shore! My brethren, we are all too insensible about each other's souls. We all say too much as the first murderer did, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Christians, I beseech you, stir up yourselves to seek the salvation of all around you. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins.

SERMON XI.

HELL.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.—*Matt. xxv*, 41.

Could I, my Christian friends, in faithfulness to your souls, have passed by, in the course I am now preaching, the subject of the present lecture, I should have rejoiced to have omitted it. But to sound an alarm, to utter the warning voice, to give notice of coming danger, is an essential part of ministerial fidelity and love.

Did we see men in general overwhelmed with the terrors of everlasting ruin, distressed with anxious apprehension, and sinking into despondency under the dread of hell, we might forbear to dwell upon a subject, in such a case uninviting and unsuitable; then it would be our more agreeable office to proclaim the riches and greatness of the salvation provided in Jesus for those ready to perish. But when we see men, almost without exception, dreading nothing less than the future punishment, wholly secure and unconcerned, regardless and careless of the miseries that are coming upon them; then how guilty must the minister be who warns not the wicked, who shuns to declare the counsel of God: that "upon the wicked God shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup." Ps. xi, 6.

It is not in the language of severe and hard denunciation, that I desire to bring so fearful a subject before you, but in that of tenderest compassion and earnest desire to promote your salvation. I am a poor sinner even as you; I by nature am "a child of wrath" as you; if I hope to escape, it is only by sovereign grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, and by daily flying to that Saviour who has delivered us from the wrath to come; and, myself having hope in him, can I but long to see you all safe in this refuge? "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." I cannot but fear there must be before me some who are in imminent peril. O that such may this day be "snatched as brands from the burning!" O that preaching on this subject may warn some to flee from the wrath to come, and may renew, in God's children, the feelings of gratitude for their own deliverance!

Christians, lift up your hearts in prayer, that a blessing may be upon us from the Lord this day.

Let us consider,

1. The persons to be punished,
2. The curse which lies upon them,
3. The everlasting punishment to be endured.

1. The persons to be punished.

We will notice these characters, The open sinner, The ungodly, and The neglecters of Christ Jesus, which include the various classes of lost souls.

1. *The open sinner.*

The Scriptures are very express on this point, and give us several catalogues, which should furnish all mentioned in them with a distinct and solemn warning of their fearful danger. Thus St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. vi, 9. So the Apostle in a similar list tells the Galatians, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. v, 19. So again he tells the Ephesians, (v, 5, 6.) "No whoremonger nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." A similar statement is made by St. John, "The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable and murderers, and whoremongers and sorcerers, and idolaters and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev. xxi.

Can any thing be more clear than these plain and affecting statements? O, if any of you are living in any of these sins, learn, we beseech you, your real danger.

2. *The ungodly.*

There are very many who have a highly fair, honourable, and respectable character before their fellow creatures. They are upright in their dealings, moral and decent in their behaviour, and possibly no charge may justly lie against them for injuries done to others, and much praise be due to them for their usefulness in society. They pride themselves on their character, and had rather lose their property or their life itself, than their reputation for integrity and morality. Yet are these persons, with all this respectability before man, fearfully guilty before God. They are guilty of a crime, which perhaps they never suspect, but which is in reality the most enormous crime of which a creature can be guilty —they are living as "without God in the world;" full of regard to man's opinion, wholly regardless of God's opinion; fully alive to man's laws, wholly unconcerned about God's laws; daily slighting and daily rebelling against that merciful Father, from whom they have received all their blessings, and who is profusely shedding, every day, bounties without number all around them. The crime of ungodliness is the iniquity which God lays to their charge. They would be just as upright in their dealings, and as kind and benevolent in their actions, if there were no God in the world. They seek not to do his will, and he "is not in all their thoughts." We do not undervalue the importance, the respectability, and the usefulness of such characters before men: but if all this be done without any regard to God and his will and his glory, of such the Scriptures say, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Ps. ix, 17. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thess. i, 7—9. "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Search then your hearts, and try your ways: is the main bent of your mind to live to God and not to yourselves?

Once more; the *Neglecters of Christ.* This is remarkably brought forward in that account of the judgment which immediately follows our text. Why are they bid to depart from Christ? He tells them, "for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee. Then shall he answer them, saying, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Observe, they never suspected the sins for which they are condemned. Those sins of omission which were not thought of by them as chargeable upon them, are the very things on account of which heaven is lost. The Scripture is remarkable on this point, for its distinctness and repetition, Thus, in this chapter of Matthew, xxv, 30, the sentence concerning the servant who did not, observe you well, did not squander or waste his Lord's talent, but who did not improve it, is, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" and in Matt. vii, 19, there is a similar mode of expression. It is not the poisonous tree merely that is to be cut down, but "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire." If the tree be barren, it is to be burned.

The true reception of Christ makes a man full of zeal and love. All who really trust in Christ are men of grateful and devoted feelings. The love of Christ constrains them, "not to live to themselves, but to him who died for them." He that abides in Him "bears much fruit." Hence omitted duties become a decisive test of a neglected Saviour. And "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" It is the only way left for sinners to escape hell. "There is none other name, given under heaven, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus. He that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." It is, therefore, obvious to all, clear from the word of God, that the neglecters of Christ shall perish for ever. Those without Christ, as well as those "without God in the world," are by the Scriptures described a having no hope.

O affecting truths! Look diligently within, brethren; see whether any of these marks are upon you: and if so, never rest, day nor night, till your soul escape from the overhanging storm of divine wrath. If to Lot the angel was urgent, when he had only to flee from the danger of a temporal ruin, O with what earnestness should we cry, Escape for thy life! flee from the wrath to come!

But let us consider,

2. The Curse which lies upon them. The expression, "*ye cursed*," is full of meaning.

Let us consider, The curse itself; and, Its development.

1. *The curse itself.*

The language is materially varied from the parallel expressions addressed to the righteous; that is, "ye blessed of my Father;" where the blessing is wholly attributed to the free love and rich grace of the heavenly Parent. But to the wicked he speaks differently; he does not say, Ye cursed of God; but simply, "ye cursed:" for sin is its own curse; it is our own disobedience that is the true root and substance of the curse. The law declares this curse: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The moment a man sins, he sows the seed of the curse, which will more assuredly spring up hereafter than the seed sown in the ground. The curse is upon the soul of every sinner. Though men perceive it not now, yet God's word abideth sure, it can never pass away. The sentence passed at the judgment is not *be* cursed; they are, through sin, already cursed, and therefore it is, "Go, *ye cursed.*"

Yet though, in this view, the curse springs from man's own sin, the evil arising from it, is through the just appointment of a Holy God, and is connected with his righteous wrath. The curse

is his awful sentence, condemning the sinner to the full punishment of sin. This curse separates from the divine favour, communion, and blessing, and makes every thing in creation injurious and terrible to him under it. If "the wrath of a king be as messengers of death," what is the wrath of the King of kings! If this wrath be kindled, who can stand before Him! How the prophet Nahum speaks on this subject. "The mountains quake at him and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

There is but one way of escape; "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, being made a curse for us." What then must be the situation of those to whom this way was proclaimed Sabbath after Sabbath, year after year, and they slighted it as of no moment, and they rejected the only Redeemer with the scornful words, "We will not have this man to reign over us," till there was no remedy. They are left under the curse, and that for ever.

Let us further notice,

2. *The Development of this Curse.*

The judgment day is the grand day of manifestation—showing what man and his doings are, and what God is; and for ever shutting the mouths of all who have spoken against God and his ways. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

The Scriptures often speak of this full manifestation of every thing in the last day. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." 1 Cor. iv, 5.

We have already considered the opening of the books in the day of judgment; but if it be asked, How can there be time for such a display of all things? how can this display be manifest to all? We reply, Nothing is impossible with God. What, if by the immediate operation of divine light and power, all the defects of our memory being removed, there be laid open to every man's recollection, at one glance, all the course of his past life,—and our memory be so quickened, restored and strengthened, that all the thoughts, words, and works of our whole lives, are presented at once to our minds! What if all of our past sins thus rush into the immediate view of the soul, and it be laid open to all the alarms of a conscience awakened to the full and even present and terrible recollection of every committed sin! This is of itself enough to overwhelm and daunt the stoutest heart. This is a "worm that never dieth."

But this is not all. It is not merely by our own conscience that our past sins will thus be instantaneously and prominently seen,—they will also all be thus visible to an assembled world. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore what ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light." As in the case of the first murderer, Cain, "The Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him;" so we may suppose there will be the marks of sin committed on earth, visible and obvious to every eye, on every lost soul.

And this manifestation of once secret and hidden sins shall be eternal, that thus the lost sinner may have stamped upon him, through eternity, the equity of his final condemnation. None of the lost shall be able for one moment to speak against the purity and equity of that sentence which dooms them to eternal woe.

But this is a subject that requires illustration. Let us endeavour to trace out the development of the curse still farther.

First observe *what disappears from the sight.*

And here I speak not of grandeur, titles, riches, honours; though all these things will for ever have vanished: or rather not have vanished, that is what the wicked would wish, but have changed

to them their very nature, and become the causes of shame, and contempt, and everlasting sorrow. That title in which the wicked man gloried, will be his aggravated condemnation; those riches in the possession of which he trusted, nay boasted, will be his everlasting perdition.

But of these I speak not, but of those things in which you once confided as ground of hope; such as these:—All false rules of judgment respecting your state, for instance, that you were not worse than your neighbours, and that your hearts were still good; all the approbation of your fellow creatures, which led you to think that you were safe; all the examples of others around you, from which you formed your sentiments of right and wrong; all the false appearance of good works which were good before man, but being done from mere worldly motives, such as desire of man's praise, regard to present and earthly good, and the like, were not good before God; all works of charity done to merit heaven, and entitle you to claim God's acceptance. These refuges of your own conceit, these superstructures of hay, straw and stubble, will all be consumed.

What! will all those good works which wicked men may have done, vanish away and be annihilated? No, even worse will the issue of them be. They will be exhibited in their real character; the show of good will be stripped from them. Their prayers will be seen to be the solemn mockery of God, and their alms a proud insult upon his sovereignty; all their hopes become their shame: "the gold becomes dim; the silver is become dross."

But if the good works of sinners disappear from the sight. Let us consider,

What appears prominent.

Those sins which they had entirely forgotten and lost sight of, awake as it were from a long sleep, and rise in all their horror and malignity and vileness, without subterfuge or excuse to cover them.

It has been thus illustrated. Suppose a man to be taken with this absurd fancy. He has a large room in his house in which he dwells, and he darkens this room. He then employs himself day after day in filling this room with wasps and hornets, vipers and serpents. Suppose farther, that as soon as these noxious creatures are placed there, they become torpid, and do not annoy him, and he forgets that they were there. At length the room is nearly filled, and then the window shutters are suddenly opened, and all these venomous creatures recover at once from their torpor, receive fresh life, and attack this man and wound him from head to foot, stinging him in every part with the unutterable anguish of their poisoned darts and fangs.

This is a picture of what shall happen to the worldly man, and of what he is doing. Sin is the wasp and the hornet, the viper and the serpent. The room is his conscience; he is daily filling this room with some sin or other: the torpor is our forgetfulness of sin, the bursting open of the windows is the hour of death, and in eternity the ceaseless stings of all the vain thoughts, idle words, neglected duties, and multiplied iniquities of our lives will for ever wound and torment our souls.

Sin now appears to be but a little evil, attended with no material consequences, and soon forgotten; but then it will appear in its real malignity and abomination, in its exceeding sinfulness. We shall see in more just proportions the glorious majesty of God, and how intolerable it is that such a creature as man is, should scorn the great and eternal God, should neglect and disregard the Almighty Creator, on whom he depends for life and breath and all things. We shall see what tremendous confusion sin produces in the whole of creation, and if once permitted with impunity, what terrible disorder, what ruin and devastation it would bring through the universe; we shall see that its bent is to dethrone God. We shall then see more of the spotless purity of God's justice, how impartial, and perfect, and holy he is! how he cannot look upon iniquity, and how glorious God is, in thus hating all sin, and we shall be enfolded in what we then discern to be the vileness of sin. The unutterable regret for rejected invitations, and the bitter, but unavailing

repentance for lost opportunities, will be another part of hell torments.

Then also will appear, in its just magnitude, what eternity is. We never understand it now, or we could not be so engrossed in this world. But O the sorrow of a suffering eternity. Have you never observed that, while joyful times pass very quickly, suffering times seem vastly longer? Job felt this when he said, "Wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone?" But all the sufferings of God's children are in this life, and therefore temporary. O what will be the wearisome agony of a *suffering* eternity!

But I stop—My brethren, what a curse is sin! Do you say God is merciful? O yes, merciful beyond our utmost thoughts—but his mercy to the good requires the punishment of the bad. Do you say that the punishment is too great for the crime? Ah! remember that the criminal is ever an unfit judge of the law which he has broken, and of the sentence by which he suffers.

Make not one vain excuse; acknowledge without equivocation, that you do for your evil deeds worthily deserve to be punished; fly at once to the Lord Jesus; there is no way of escape but in him. But O the rich and full glories of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! In him there is a complete salvation. He, by his sufferings, has made full satisfaction for all your sins; he has removed the curse by bearing it for you. He, by his obedience, has wrought out a perfect righteousness. O that you were wise, and understood this! Were you not wrapped up in the darkness of sin, you would neither give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, until you had hope of deliverance, and would indeed count every thing but loss, to "win Christ, and be found in him."

Christians, can you bless God enough, day by day, if you have seen your ruin by nature, and you have been turned to God, and are "waiting for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come?"

SERMON XII.

HELL.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.—*Matt. xxv*, 41.

On this soul-stirring and alarming subject, we have already preached one sermon, in which we proposed to consider it under three heads.—1. The persons to be punished. 2. The curse which lies upon them. 3. The everlasting punishment to be endured. We pointed out the persons to be punished under three characters: the open sinner, the ungodly, and the neglecters of Christ Jesus:—and the curse which lies upon them in two views; the curse itself, and the development of that curse under what disappears and what appears prominent. But O how wonderful is our hardness and insensibility to these things. If you heard that your house had taken fire, and the flames were spreading from room to room, how would it agitate you! But you can hear of eternal flames unmoved and unaffected. This shows how true is the scriptural account of man as dead in sin. There remains to consider,

3. *The everlasting Punishment to be endured.*

The wicked go away into everlasting punishment.

The punishment of which we now speak, is the punishment to be inflicted on the wicked after the day of judgment. And in order to have distinct views, remember there is, to the righteous dying the Lord, a double state of blessedness, a paradise before the judgment day, as well as the glory of heaven after the judgment day. There is also to the wicked dying in sin, a double state of misery, a hell before the day of judgment, and after that judgment the lake of fire and brimstone, in which the wicked are tormented forever and ever. It is said by Job, (xxi 30,) "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth on the day of wrath." And Peter declares, "The Lord knoweth how—to reserve the unjust unto the day

of judgment to be punished." 2 Pet. ii, 9. They are now in the prison of hell, where the rich man was cast on his death, and they are there with the fallen angels, "delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

What that judgment is, we have now to consider. I will point out,

1. The judge who sentences them.
2. The loss of good.
3. The suffering of woe.
4. The accursed society.
5. The perpetual punishment.

1. THE JUDGE WHO SENTENCES THEM.

Here is the first fearful part of the woe. There is but one Saviour for lost sinners, even now. There is but one Mediator and Advocate. He is tender, he is full of compassion; but this very Being becomes the awful judge. "The wrath of Him that sitteth on the throne is the wrath of the Lamb." If it were a cruel tyrant who sentenced them, there would be less ground for despair and horror. But it is one whose love is as unquestionable as his justice. He who left his Father's glory, who emptied himself of divine fulness, and took upon him the form of a servant, to die, that sinners might not die eternally, he must love man. He who wears our nature, must know our frame, and therefore must be an equitable judge. And yet, such is his truth, his purity, and his holiness, that from his own mouth proceeds the unutterably dreadful doom, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels."

O when I think how the sinner will at the last day tremble in his presence; and look now at the way in which he slights and despises him, I am struck with amazement at his present unconcern. Talk to men now about subjection to Christ, they mock at you as enthusiasts; but O the day will come, when the remembrance of a dishonoured Christ will cut the heart with bitterest regret. "O my madness," will the lost soul say, "Christ was proclaimed in my ears, I was invited to come to receive freely from him salvation. He was a sufficient Redeemer, but now the only possible Redeemer is my judge, my sentencer, my condemner for ever."

Mark again the punishment as it consists in privation, or,

2. THE LOSS OF GOOD.

This is implied in that fearful word depart,—*Depart from me.*

Our Lord frequently thus describes the condition of the lost. Matt. vii, 23. "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." So we are told, Psalm v, 5. "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

Now to understand this, remember that sinners can have nothing, and hope for nothing from a holy God, but through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only channel by which any good, either for our souls, or our bodies, for time or for eternity, can come to us. But this Mediator has been rejected and despised by those on whom this sentence is denounced. They would not have Christ for their Saviour, they would not have spiritual blessings through him; they would not acknowledge that their worldly good was given through him. Most justly, then, is all good taken away. *All the good of this world*, its riches, honours, and pleasures; its health and vigour, its cheerfulness and mirth, its ease, independence, security and comfort, all, all are then lost. The *alleviations also of this world's evils*, are there removed. There is disease from head to foot, but no medicine, no physician, no healing balm; there is malice, hatred, revenge, wrath, and enmity to the uttermost, but no love and forgiveness, no friend to protect and comfort; there is shame and contempt without measure, but no respect, and honour, and approbation.

All spiritual and heavenly joys are lost. The favour and love of Almighty God, and all the joys of the light of his countenance, and the beaming eye of his tenderness, which ever delight the souls of the blessed,—the blissful sight of Christ, and the abode with him, who feeds his people, and leads them to the heavenly springs, and by the fountains of living waters, all, all is lost! "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The society of the glorious company of the

Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the triumph of the noble army of martyrs, and the glory of the holy Church universal, are for ever lost! O unconverted sinners, before it be too late, think of that place where there shall be no light, no joy; think what it will be to see "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," and all the prophets "in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Luke xiii, 28. O to be shut out of those joyful and happy regions, and shut up with the wicked for ever! "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh" a lie. Rev. xxii, 15. Here is of itself a hell. By their present miserable want of it, they know too late the value of the blessedness.

All this loss too is ascribable to themselves; it is their own fault. "They said unto God, depart from us, and what can the Almighty do for us?" (Job xxii, 17,) and voluntarily chose that loss under which they smart. Suppose a man comes into the possession of a large estate, with a still richer reversion in reserve; suppose by prodigality and wastefulness, he squanders both away; and suppose, reduced to the lowest state of watchfulness and want, he beholds all the estate and reversion in the possession of one whom he despised; surely he must painfully and remorsely bewail his folly:—thus foolish is the unconverted sinner now, and thus will he bewail his loss of heaven, only with inconceivable aggravation of sorrow, according to the unsearchable greatness of his loss.

Those who once said, as the Gadarenes did to Christ, "Depart from us," will not again see the Saviour till they hear him say, "Depart from me," and all their loss is irreparable; to them "the mist of darkness is reserved forever."

3. The suffering of woe.

This is expressed in the word *fire;* the most acute suffering we know upon earth being that occasioned by fire. The original expression is emphatically the fire, the everlasting fire; as if all other fires were but figures compared with this last great fire of divine wrath.

Do we conclude, then, that there will be real and material fire? there may, or there may not be; we presume not to decide what may be the exact nature of that punishment, the sharpness of which this term represents, but those objections which are sometimes brought against material fire, are not really conclusive. If it be said, the rich man was in hell immediately on his death, and fire hurts not disembodied spirits, more is said than can be proved; fire not only hurts the mind, from the connection which God has established between the body and the soul; and it may please him to establish a constitution by which the disembodied spirit may also suffer there from fire. The body shall also be raised, and the body and soul of the wicked are to be alike the subjects of future torment.

Is is perfectly clear, however, that it must denote exquisite suffering, even extremity of pain, and that the whole man will thus suffer. There is a *place* of torment for the body; Judas went "to his own place." Acts i, 25. There is a *state* of torment for the soul. And O how unutterable that torment, when whichever way the soul look, there is nothing but tribulation and anguish! If it look back on the past, it sees time wasted away, opportunity for ever lost, enjoyment irrecoverably gone, folly irremediably and eternally ruinous. If it look within and around, fiery flames, unmitigated pain, "the worm that never dies." If it look to the future, O that fearful look, judgment to come, wrath to come, and that for ever.

The wicked fall into the hands of the living God, and he is said "to show his wrath and to make his power known on the vessels fitted for destruction." Rom. ix, 22. O terrible words! Sinners, unconverted sinners, fear above all fear, to fall into the hands of the living God! Think of his power, it is Almighty. Think of his wrath, it is infinite.

But there is one thing farther that should peculiarly alarm nominal Christians. There are degrees of punishment in hell, and there is special aggravation of suffering to the specially wicked; and those are accounted specially wicked, who had Christian advantages and neg-

ected them. Thus our Lord says, "that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Thus Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum enjoyed the light of the Gospel, but disregarded it, and our Lord says, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment." O nominal Christians, flee, we beseech you, from the wrath to come. You will wish that you had been born a Hottentot or New Zealander, or any thing rather than to have had all the aggravated guilt of neglecting the full privileges of a Christian land.

4. The accursed society.

It is prepared for the Devil and his angels.

Here is another tremendous part of the sinner's doom.—It is *prepared*. For six thousand years those fires have been preparing and materials have been gathering together. God has had the disposal of every brand. How Isaiah says, xxx, 33. "Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the King," (even the King of kings,) "it is prepared. He hath made it deep and large, the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

And when that is the company—Devils and evil spirits. Ah! to be associated with those cruel, malignant, and hateful beings, who first tempted, and will then laugh and mock us, taunt us, and torment us, is indeed woe. To be associated, for ever too, with liars and murderers, thieves, drunkards, and adulterers! Those who have forgotten God, may have been disgusted with gross sinners, and yet now to be for ever joined with the most vile and abandoned, and linked with them for ever in the one prison of hell, this is an aggravation of misery that no mind can adequately conceive. The wicked may be pleasant enough to the wicked in their mirth, but will they like each other as companions for ever in torment?

5. The perpetual punishment.

The suffering is eternal and unreversible. This God does most plainly assert: he calls it in our text, "everlasting fire." It is also contrasted with the reward of the righteous. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal," v, 46.

The strongest terms are repeatedly used on this point. It is said by our Lord, (Mark ix, 43—48,) "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," and this is in substance repeated again and again, so as to have in a few verses, six solemn assertions of the eternal duration of the future punishment. So we find by Jude 7. The wicked shall suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire." In Rev. xiv, 10, 11, we read that he who receives the mark of the beast, shall "drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without measure into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

Thus God has expressly declared, that the punishment of the wicked shall be everlasting. How then is that punishment to be ended? By force. What, overpower omnipotence? By fraud. What, outwit infinite wisdom? By exhaustion. Can any thing be annihilated? What, in contradiction to the divine will!

But is it not unjust to visit upon a temporary sin an eternal woe? Ah! do you not even in this world see men suffer lasting evils from a momentary sin. If it be necessary for God to threaten, it is right for God to execute, and the necessity of the threatening is proved as even the tremendous penalty does not deter many from the sin, and though multitudes are warned, and escape the coming wrath, multitudes still go on in sin notwithstanding every threatening.

But it may relieve the Christian's doubts of the divine veracity on this fearful subject, to remember that our obligations to God being infinite, life and death being placed before us, and the wicked voluntarily choosing death, justly merit the awful penalty. They remain

impenitent in hell itself, they go on sinning there, and if they had lived here for ever, they would have gone on sinning for ever; God is clear when he judges, and even those who suffer will be constrained to justify him who condemns them to eternal woe.

In the vast extent of God's creation, when we look abroad on the starry firmament, and see worlds upon worlds, what if there be one region like a prison, where the just Governor of the whole universe, confines criminals, as a moral lesson to the universe, a guard against rebellion, and a preservative to obedience. Can you say that this may not be in infinite wisdom, equity, and love.

But, mainly and chiefly, hell is the mirror which displays the glories of his power, and truth, and justice, and holiness. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" O risk not eternal ruin on the most improbable of all contingencies, the chance that God may lie and deceive, or rather on the utter impossibility that he should do so.

Do you say it is severe? Ah! remember the assertion flies back. Be not so severe to yourselves, as to rush upon it for vain pleasures; wrong not, destroy not, your own selves; you are forewarned, and yet you hasten to the ruin; it is distinctly laid before you, and yet you prefer it to self-denial, faith, hope, and love.

The voice of the whole sermon is, "Flee from the wrath to come." Linger not a moment on the plain. Escape, "escape for thy life" to the mountain, lest thou be consumed; escape to the city of refuge, even Christ Jesus.

In applying this, I would add two or three plain directions.

1. *Dread Sin as the worst of all Evils.* Losses of property are evils; poverty and contempt are evils; sicknesses in our persons or families are evils; national calamities are evils; wars and famines, and pestilences are evils; but sin is the worst evil, for it is the cause of all others; bringing down upon the creature the displeasure and wrath of him from whose appointment all suffering originally comes, as well as all happiness, and, if having its full issue, landing the sinner in endless ruin. O sinner, stop in thy mad course; sin will be thy ruin here and for ever, if persisted in.

2. *Repent in time.* There is a way of escape; there is space afforded for a change of mind. "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out," ere it be too late. You want a changed mind, consisting in a deep sorrow for sin, a hearty acknowledgment of it before God, a lively faith in his free pardon through the blood of Jesus, and then an amended life in righteousness and true holiness. You must be born again, and God has promised, if you will inquire of him, to give a new heart and a new spirit. O can you be content to receive all your good in this life, and to be miserable for ever? but "except you repent, you must perish." Turn you then, "turn you, for why will you die."

Value Christ Jesus supremely, as the only refuge, the all-sufficient Saviour of the lost. Are you yet impenitent and unconverted? O value Christ, as able to give you repentance, and exalted for this very purpose. He came into the world to be the Deliverer from the wrath to come; He yet lives to make intercession for the transgressors. Apply to Him. You are yet in the land of prayer and of hope: you are yet within the possibility of salvation; it may be, you may yet reach the good land afar off, and gain everlasting light, and life, and glory; it shall be, if you do in earnest go to Jesus with all your sins, and trust in him.

Are you trusting in Jesus, and converted to God! blessed is your state! "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii, 1. Christians can say of him, "He hath delivered us from from the wrath to come." 1 Thess i, 10. They can stand on the rock of Divine truth, amidst all the raging storm of wrath rushing on the ungodly, and be in perfect security, under "the hiding place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" He who has the keys of death and hell, is their friend, and none can hurt or annoy. O Christians, may gratitude to your Redeemer, and tender com-

passion for perishing sinners, and persevering endeavors to lead them to your Protector and Deliverer, bear testimony that you are the redeemed of the Lord, whom he hath delivered out of the hand of the enemy, and formed for himself a people to show forth his praise!

SERMON XIII.

HEAVEN.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light; and they shall reign forever.—*Rev. xxii.* 3, 4, 5.

Candidates for immortal bliss! here is the prize of your high calling! Here is the glorious recompense held out for your attainment. To assist you to gain this, is the noble object of my whole ministry. O that you and I may together attain this holy and eternal happiness.

We have now to consider this—the inheritance of the saints, the state of heavenly happiness and glory. May the Divine Spirit elevate our thoughts, and aid our conceptions, in reference to this the blessed hope of our calling.

Do you ask, Is such a state attainable by fallen sinful creatures? May I reach those happy regions? I will also ask you one question. Do you so really desire it as to follow the divine direction for its attainment? Are you prepared to sacrifice every thing that would interfere with your progress towards, and preparation for it? If indeed this be so, then I reply, It is attainable to you. Not one shall honestly, heartily, and enduringly seek this glory in God's appointed method, and fail of success. O that the consideration of the subject may excite in all the holy ambition of being for ever blessed in the presence of Him in whose presence is fullness of joy!

This blessedness comprises,

1. The entire removal of evil,
2. The full possession of good,
3. Delightful occupation,
4. The beatific vision,
5. Perpetual glory.

1. The entire removal of evil.

Without this no happiness can be complete; whatever good there may be, as long as any admixture of evil remains, there is a root of bitterness, which would disturb and trouble the pure streams of enjoyment.

This part of our future happiness we can the better comprehend. It is brought before us under two terms, *no curse*, and *no night there.*

1. *There will be no curse there.* No remains of God's displeasure nor anger—not one frown on his brow. There will be nothing to occasion a curse; not one sin remaining, no temptation will be presented before us, nor ever ruffle our peaceful minds; no conflict with indwelling corruption; no warfare with any spiritual enemy. Not one spiritual enemy will be there. From that happy kingdom of light and love, Satan and all his emissaries and followers are for ever excluded. Nor is there any ensnaring world to seduce, nor deceitful heart to betray, nor an evil thought engendered within nor suggested from without. There is therefore nothing to call down the curse.

Nor is there any of God's anger on account of our past sins. Then in its fullest sense will it be true, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Isa. xii. 1. As there is no condemnation on God's part, so there are no accusations of conscience on the sinner's part. That promise will be fulfilled, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah, vii. 19. The soul adorned with the Redeemer's beauties, and enriched with the lovely graces of his Spirit, takes up the inspiring strain, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Isa. lxi. 10.

All those temporal sufferings, which

follow the curse, will also forever have terminated. "There is no pain" there. Rev. xxi. 4. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Isa. xxxiii. 24. And as no disease invades the human frame, so there is no death there. Rev. xxi, 4. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Rev. vii, 16. Thus there is no sickness, and the body is freed from all those weaknesses and infirmities which weigh it down, and depress and burden it here. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown in a natural body; it is raised in a spiritual body." 1 Cor. xv.

All those beings who are under the curse will be for ever removed. Now the Christian is day by day "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; rivers of tears run down his eyes, because men keep not God's laws;" he sees the God whom he serves dishonored, his laws trampled upon, his day profaned, and the ungodly triumphing: but no sinner shall stand "in the congregation of the righteous" there (Psalm i, 5.) —all are of one heart and one mind.

In hell, all curses meet, concentrate, and there are confined: And why is it otherwise in heaven? how can sinners ever gain those celestial heights? why do they, once defiled with sin, but now free from all sin, dwell in those holy places where enters nothing that defileth? The reason is this, they were among those "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;" he kept them from falling, and preserved them "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Would you be free from all curse, O look to him, who alone has redeemed you; who alone can redeem you from the curse.

2. *There will be no night there.*

No absence from God the true light, nor any of the evils consequent on that. If here we find the night as well as the day a blessing, it is because we need its quiet and repose—it is on account of our infirmities. If perfectly happy and unwearied, night would only be an interruption depriving us of a portion of our bliss.

Truly *the light is sweet*: it spreads beauty and glory in its track over regions, which without it are all gloom and obscurity. But the brightest day on earth, with all its lovely scenes, its waving corn, its verdant fields, its peaceful rivers, glittering in the sun, and all the richness of the expanded prospect, beaming with light and beauty, are but as the dark night compared with the surpassing glory of the heavenly day. "The night" says the Apostle, speaking of this life, "the night, is far spent, the day is at hand."

And truly there will be no occasion for night there. Our bodies will be too powerful and active, and strong, either to admit of fatigue, or to require rest. We shall be too happy to desire for a moment, cessation or change. Those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple," they rest not from their blissful employment.

The expression, no night, seems more immediately to convey the idea of the absence of all evil incident to a state of darkness, whether spiritual or temporal. There will be no sinful ignorance, no error in our conceptions of things. There will be no guilt desiring darkness to veil its criminal conduct; no concealment requisite to hide any thing from observation; no danger of deviating from the right path, nor reason to dread the approach of enemies to invade our tranquillity.

In the Divine dispensations on earth, there have been darker and brighter days. The Jewish dispensation compared with the Gospel was a time of shade and darkness. The middle ages were dark ages —but in all dispensations as contrasted with the state of heavenly glory, "now we see through a glass darkly." In that glorious rest there is the brightness of one everlasting day—a cloudless and eternal lustre, with full capability of body and mind for all its glory.

And in hell there is "the blackness of darkness," and all is night for ever; so in heaven there is the noon day blaze, and that forever. Every thing that is dark and ignorant, with all the sorrows of an earthly state, is gone; "God shall

wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

Thus is every evil entirely removed; and even in this negative view, does not heaven, my brethren, present something unspeakably attractive and engaging? But it comprises—

2. THE FULL POSSESSION OF GOOD.

Two expressions point out this,—*the throne of God, and of the Lamb is there* and *the Lord God giveth them light.*

I would consider this in two views: the manifestation of God's glory, and the light which he imparts.

The manifestation of God's glory.

In the first verse of the chapter we read of "a pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the the Lamb:" which seems to be more especially intended to point out the quickening and purifying communications of the Holy Ghost, of which our Saviour speaks, under the same figure of *rivers of living waters.* John vii, 37—39.

In the presence and enjoyment of the triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consists the complete possession of all good. Heavenly happiness is being present with the glorious God, and fully enjoying him as our portion and reward. We know what a difference it makes to have with us a beloved earthly friend; how children rejoice in the love and presence of a tender mother; and the wife in the society of a beloved husband; and the friend in the intercourse of an endeared earthly friend; and those greatly indebted to a benefactor in his continued regard and kindness: and how quickly time flies away in such converse. But O what will it be when without alloy we see our best parent, our true husband, our greatest benefactor, our greatest friend, face to face, and dwell with him forever!

The Scriptures represent this as the distinguishing privilege of heaven. Our Lord says, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also; (John xiv, 3.) and in his prayer to his Father, he offers up this ardent glowing petition, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John xvii, 24. And so he assured the penitent thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Luke xxiii, 43.

The same hopes are continually expressed by the people of God. "Having a desire," says St. Paul, "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better;" (Phil. i, 23.) and speaking of Christians he says, "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord;" (2 Cor. v, 8.) and so shall we ever be with the Lord; wherefore comfort ye one another with these words." 1 Thess. iv, 17, 18.

Let the miser rejoice in the possession of unsubstantial wealth; let the sensualist have his momentary joys; let the ambitious, or the man of science, or of human wisdom pride themselves in the attainment of their several objects; O what is their happiness compared with that of him who has for his portion, the God of true riches, of true glory, of true pleasures, and can bathe in that ocean of Divine fulness for ever and ever!

Now, we do not see God on his throne. Beautiful as our world may be, the earth is but his footstool; and though he does reign, still it is not apparent to the eye of sense. Wicked men seem to prosper, the enemies of God see to have the upper hand. When our Lord was on earth, though spiritual eyes beheld his glory, "the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" he was not seated on the throne, but was despised and rejected of men. When God was worshipped in his temple at Jerusalem, there was but the typical outward service, the figure of the true; and though in the holy of holies on the mercy seat, there were symbols of the Divine presence; still was he not seen as he is. In the temple, mentioned in Ezekiel, the waters flowed from under the threshhold, (Ezek. xlvii, 1—12.) emblematic of the more distant communion we have now with God; but in heaven they flow directly from the throne. For there God is visibly seen as the sovereign.

reigning not only with undisputed, but with universally acknowledged and manifested, unspeakably glorious, delightful and joyful empire over that happy world. The language of every blessed spirit there, not in distant hope, but in actual and full possession, is—"In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The light which God imparts.

They need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.

We notice what they have no need of, and what they possess.

What they need not. They need no candle; that is, no borrowed or artificial light, invented to supply the absence of a better and greater. All human means are imperfect; all sensible things to supply our necessities, as they are but remedies for defects, so they are themselves defective. The clothes that protect us from the cold, wear out and need to be renewed; the fire that warms, consumes away in the very act of communicating warmth; the food that nourishes, is destroyed in affording that nourishment; the candle in shedding its light, gradually wastes away; and all these helps are but imperfect and incomplete, and therefore, when that which is perfect comes, that which is in part shall be done away.

They need no sun—that is, no indirect light through the creatures of God. We know God now by his works. We see him through sensible images; "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge.

Tell them I AM, Jehovah said
To Moses, while earth shook with dread;
And smitten to the heart,
At once above, beneath, around,
All nature without voice, or sound,
Replied: O Lord! THOU ART.

This is the still greater light of Revelation; the light of grace, which tells us much of God, that we could never discern in the book of creation.

A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic as the sun;
It gives a light to every age—
It gives, but borrows none.

But the light of glory transcends all these. Let us consider, then, *What they possess. The Lord God giveth them light.* He enlightens them directly from himself: no borrowed light from his works, no teaching of the creature, but direct and immediate from the Creator himself—"in thy light shall we see light."

Many and inestimable are the blessings which are comprehended in this gift. It seems more especially to denote knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

There will be *perfect knowledge there.* This is according to that statement, "now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Now our greatest blessings are apprehended only by faith, but then they will be actually ours by sight and enjoyment. Now, what time it takes to learn to read! what patience and application to acquire knowledge! what loss of health to become extensively learned! But there, at a glance, we shall take in more knowledge than years of study and experience can give the most laborious student here. We shall see them intuitively and at once. All that which is dark and obscure as the thick night will have the broad light of day shed over it. We shall see the beauty of God's ways, the infinite wisdom, and the boundless love displayed in our heaviest sorrows and severest trials. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." O the glories of that history of histories, the developing and unfolding of the providential dispensations of God towards his people! We shall hold personal converse with the glorified objects of them; with Enoch, and Noah, and Moses, and all the saints of God; and what a knowledge will this give, of the wonders of Divine wisdom, truth, grace, and love. And each saint in glory will be as a mirror reflecting another and another view of the graces, beauties and glories of Immanuel.

Perfect holiness is another part of the light there fully given. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," and in those happy regions it is in the highest

sense true, "we walk in the light as he is in the light." There will not be one sin left to defile us. O the blessedness of entire freedom from every sin! When that galling yoke of bondage is not only eased but withdrawn, and the last Egyptian, as it were, is seen dead on the sea shore, with what exultation shall we sing, "The Lord is my strength and song; he is become my salvation!" Never can the Christian have fulness of joy while one sin remains; but when that perfect holiness which becomes God's house forever, is his, and in that house, when Christ shall appear and we shall be like him, then shall the enlarged mind of the believer be completely filled, "Then shall I be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness."

Perfect happiness is also included in this expression, "Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart." Here, even in the very seed time, there is a present reward, in keeping God's commandments, but when we come to reap the harvest of joy, O what joy must be that which is called by God himself fulness of joy! Our best joys here are transitory and limited; but there will be unlimited, boundless, and eternal joy. See the glorious throng—observe the palms in their hands, and the crowns on their heads, behold them arrayed in the white garments before the throne. Who are these? They are the redeemed of the Lord—"they come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain, they shall forever possess, gladness and joy—and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

But they take up their golden harps, they begin one of the heavenly songs, the number of those who join is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and the grand united chorus of all is "Blessing and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

And as all their happiness flows directly from God, so it is unceasing and secure. The Lord giveth; there is an incessant flow of knowledge, and holiness, and happiness.

O how triumphant and enrapturing, the song of praise raised by the heavenly host in the full enjoyment of all this blessedness! "With what life and alacrity will the saints in their blessed communion exalt the object of their love and praise! The Seraphim about the throne cry out to one another, to express their zeal and joy in celebrating his eternal purity and power, and the glory of his goodness. O the unspeakable pleasure of this concert, when every soul is harmonious, and contributes his full part to the music of heaven! Could we hear but some echo of those songs, wherewith the heaven of heavens resounds, some remains of those voices wherewith the saints above triumph in the praises and in the solemn adoration of the King of Spirits, how would it inflame our desires to be joined with them. 'Blessed are those that are in thy house, they always praise thee.'"

O that I could in any way stir up all earnestly and zealously to seek heaven. Honestly and earnestly turn your back on this world and all its sins, and set your faces to Zion, and you shall reach those heavenly heights, and arrive at that blessed city whose "walls are salvation, and all her gates praise." Count all but loss for this, and stretch every nerve, if by any means you may be counted worthy to attain this glory.

SERMON XIV.

HEAVEN.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever. *Rev. xxii.* 3, 4. 5.

Could heavenly happiness be seen in all its blessedness, there would be no room for the full exercise of faith, and comparatively little display of the excellence of divine grace in the hope, and patience, and holiness of God's people. To exercise faith, it is only revealed in prospect;

to excite hope, it is but partially developed, and it "doth not yet appear what we shall be."

We proposed to consider, 1. The entire removal of evil, 2. The full possession of good, 3, The delightful occupation, 4. The beatific vision, 5. The perpetual glory enjoyed. The two former of these we have already explained. We proceed to consider,

3. THE DELIGHTFUL OCCUPATION.

His servants shall serve him.

Notice *the glorious Being who is served.*

The King of Kings: the ever-living God. It is not clear whether the sacred writer designed to refer to the Father or the Son; nor is it at all material. There is a perfect unity. "He that honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father also." The Being served is he to whom all service alone is due. Created by his power, redeemed by his blood, sanctified by his spirit, shall they not for ever consecrate every power to him whose they are, and to whom all they can render is infinitely due! According to the rank of the master, is the elevation of the servant; to be in the immediate service of the King is thought a high office; what is it immediately to serve the Lord God omnipotent!

Notice next *his servants.*

What were they? once vile miserable sinners, alienated from God and his enemies by wicked works; but they heard of "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They thus, quickened by his Spirit, served him in faith, hope, and love, and learned on earth the employment of heaven, to do the will of God. These servants are redeemed sinners and glorified saints. While servants, they are children also; they dwell with their master as children with a parent, and they ever behold his face beaming with love and joy unspeakable. Once they aimed to serve him, but it was more aim than attainment. Once they prayed, "*thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,*" and now that prayer is fully accomplished, and they themselves enjoy the very measure of their desires, and in heaven itself "delight to do the will of God."

Observe farther, *the nature of their service.*

But what mind can conceive the holy admiration with which they behold the glories of God, the joyful gratitude with which they celebrate his praises; the delightful exertions with which they fly to do his will!

But did they not serve God below? What is the difference between their serving him here, and their serving him there? As to our service here, we are soon weary in it. Our spirits flag, we require rest; but there the mind is ever lively and awake, the body is ever active and alive, the service is unwearied. As to our service here, it is full of imperfection, our faith is weak, our hope is dull, our love is cold, our praises are feeble, all is disproportioned and imperfect; but in that blessed world, faith becomes sight, hope is there enjoyment, love burns with intense ardour, and praises from the heart ever ascend; all is proportioned and perfect. In this world our service soon ceases, nearly one third of our time is lost in sleep, and of how much of the rest do worldliness and sin continually rob God! If we enjoy communion with him in prayer or praise, the service is soon past and gone; but there, our service is perpetual, the happy employment of doing God's will shall occupy us for ever.

Once more, observe the *communion* there enjoyed *with our fellow servants.* The glorified saints rejoice in each other's holiness and happiness, and thus the general happiness of the whole is infinitely extended and enlarged. There are many hindrances to full communion here. Real Christians know but few real Christians; and through the many interruptions of this world, they have seldom much opportunity of fully knowing each other. Our own corruptions, and the infirmities of all God's servants here, hinder full and entire union of heart; but there will be no allays of this kind there. No envy or jealousy at each other's gifts and graces, happiness and glory. Just as the eye envies not the ear, and the hand envies not the foot;

but all the members of the body are exalted in the happiness of each, so will it be there. The happiness of another will be mine in his possessing it; as the wife is exalted in the husband, and the child in the parent, so shall there be joy in the presence of the glorified servants of God, in every joy that every servant possesses. You shall be in that glorious company, where there is the full conviction that you love every individual there, and every individual loves you, and this purely, fervently, perfectly, and for ever.

But let us go still farther, and contemplate,

4. The blessed sight of God,

Or, as it is called, the beatific vision.

They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.

We have here the nature of this vision, and its efficacy.

1. *The nature of this vision—they shall see his face.*

Have distinct, clear, and full views of God, as we have when we see another face to face. When Adam was innocent he lived in the immediate presence of God, in the earthly paradise, the garden of Eden. He was, on his fall, expelled from that happy garden, and lost the sight of God. The Gospel is a process for man's recovering more than Adam lost. In order to this recovery, God gives his people the grace of faith, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." We walk by faith, and in the exercise of faith have communion with God, but it is with many interruptions, and with much obscurity.

God is indeed every where throughout his infinite universe, higher than the heavens, deeper than hell, wider than the East from the West, or the North from the South, incomprehensibly perfect, indivisibly immense and eternal.

But in what the Scriptures call the third heavens, he peculiarly manifests himself to his happy creatures. There are the first heavens, the regions of the air; the second heavens, which is the starry firmament; and the third heavens, the special residence of God. O how glorious that heavenly Jerusalem which is above! "With allusion to the brightest things here below, it is said to have a wall of jasper, buildings of gold, a foundation of precious stones, and gates of pearls; being clear as crystal, shining like unto glass, and transparent in brightness:" and if the gates be of pearl, and the streets be of gold, what are the inner rooms?

But the chief glory is this,—there God manifests his immediate presence. To see God perfectly is often described as the special happiness of his people hereafter. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord—blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face—we shall see him as he is." This sight of God includes an intimate knowledge of which we can now have but little conception and a satisfying conviction of his love to us.

It was the privilege of many saints on earth to have such communion with God, that they have been said to see him face to face. Thus Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, Gen. xxxii. 30. Thus Moses, when the Lord spake to him face to face, (Ex. xxxiii. 11,) and he tells the Israelites, "the Lord talked with you face to face," Deut. v. 4. All these however, were very limited views of God. When Moses would behold his glory, he was told, "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me, and live;" and it was only in a cleft of a rock, that he was allowed, and that for a moment, to see some distant rays of his glory.

But now, in heaven, they behold that glory shining in its strength: not visibly with the eye, nor sensibly with the ear—for God is a Spirit; but by immediate manifestation of it, they behold him as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty."

This glorious object of vision will engage every eye, eclipse every other light, and fill the whole circuit of the heavenly regions with its own brightness. Adored and magnified in his true glory as the

One Lord, and loved with inexpressible love, he will be the joy and the portion of the heavenly inhabitants for ever.

The transforming effect of this sight must also be observed.

And His name is on their foreheads. That is, they become manifestly and obviously like the glorious God. The sight of God's glory, as discovered in the Gospel, is assimilating and transforming. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii, 18. When Moses had been with God in the Mount, his face shone, so that the Israelites could not behold him without a veil. But in heaven we may well suppose this effect is more immediate and complete. Then will "the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

The name or character of God is even now visibly stamped on Christians. They "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness;" but, through manifold infirmities, it is often very difficult to discern, either in ourselves or in others, this name or divine impress.

But in heaven the name of God will be distinct and legible. His servants will be pure "as he is pure, holy as he is holy, and merciful as he is merciful." O what a blessed state of soul, when there is entire goodness and perfect love —not one jarring note of discord, not one imagination of evil!

Nay the glorified body even will attain some resemblance of the glorious God; for it will be immortal, incorruptible, powerful, and spiritual. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father." And who can realize all the glory of that scene, when every body of every saint reflects the glory of its Divine Creator!

5. The perpetual glory enjoyed.

They shall reign for ever and ever.

Here notice, their glory, and its perpetuity.

Their glory—They shall reign.

The glory of heaven is often described as a kingdom, and Christians as kings reigning in that kingdom. Our Saviour says to his people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" and they for ever sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion."

Even in this life, Christians are called a Royal Priesthood, as the sure expectants of a crown of life, (Rev. ii, 10,) a crown of righteousness, (2 Tim. iv, 8,) and a crown of glory, (1 Pet. v, 4.) But here they are only heirs, training up for their future glorious elevation.

But why are they called kings? Because a kingdom is the highest pinnacle of human elevation, and therefore best serves to illustrate those incomparable heights of bliss and glory to which we shall be raised hereafter.

I say incomparable, because our heavenly bliss is infinitely beyond that of the most favoured earthly monarch. In all earthly kings, their royalty soon terminates; at the latest, in death, and sometimes before: but, at best, their glory is unsolid and brittle. They often do not begin to reign till half a life is gone by. And then much of their time, though kings, must be spent as other men's lives are; they are subject to the same infirmities as other men; nor is even their dominion free from a bondage: to maintain dominion requires no little sacrifice and slavery.

Now take the contrary of all these defects: a royalty never lost, enduring through eternity, without the smallest restraint or sacrifice, and something may be conceived of the glory of God's elect in his own kingdom.

And farther, it has this peculiarity; it is a kingdom possessed by an infinity of kings of such a character, that the glory and happiness of each adds to the glory and happiness of all. The stars in the heavens are single points of light. But in the heaven of heavens, such is the union of these stars, that all is light—one great constellation of glory; "the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever."

Which leads me to consider,

Its perpetuity—it is *for ever and ever.*

It is not a leasehold estate for the most lengthened term imaginable. Kingdoms on earth have their periods, their rise and prosperity, their decline and fall. But this kingdom is ever rising and prospering, and will never fall or decline. Were eternity wanting, it would give a cast of darkness and gloom over the fairest scene of heaven's meridian glory.

Abraham told the rich man, "they that would pass from us to you cannot: not that they for a moment could admit the thought of leaving; but supposing an impossible case—if they would, they cannot.

The Scriptures always describe it under the character of perpetuity. It is everlasting life, eternal glory, eternal salvation, an eternal inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Christ, everlasting habitations, a continuing city, a house eternal in the heavens, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. In a similar view, St. John describes the blessed as "a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." Rev. iii, 12. Their blessedness is therefore secure for eternity.

And in this eternity, as we cannot cease to admire, and love, and delight in that infinite object of glory, so we cannot cease to be happy. The eternal God, that boundless and unfathomable ocean of love and all perfection, the saints shall for ever praise; praise Him for what he is in Himself, and praise him for what he has done and is doing for them and for all others: and as the rays of Divine love and glory shine upon them, they are reflected back again in ceaseless, joyful hallelujahs.

How interrupted is all human happiness below! If we enjoy communion with God, how soon we lose the sense of his presence! If the light of his countenance shine upon us, it is but for a moment. How different will it be there! O the glories of those words, *for ever with the Lord!* Well may we comfort each other with those words. Then again here, often the Christian is cast down with the fear of perishing at the last: "What if I should fall short at last of heaven!" is a thought that cannot but agitate his mind. But in heaven there is no ground for such an anxiety, no possibility of such a loss: he is there, he is confirmed there forever. After millions on millions of ages, the happiness will be as far from diminishing, and as far from ending as when it commenced.

But language utterly fails; imagination fails; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. ii. The *eye* of man has seen many splendid sights, goodly prospects, rich and extended views, magnificent palaces adorned with all that art can contrive, and splendid cities full of splendid edifices: the *ear* has heard awakening and soul-thrilling eloquence, ravishing music, touching and exquisite melodies, and tender and melting expressions of sympathy and kindness: the *heart* has conceived worlds upon worlds; it can multiply, it can enlarge, it can beautify to the utmost stretch of fancy's limits:—and yet the glory of heaven is beyond all that ever human eye saw, or human ear heard, or human heart ever can now conceive.

So the Scriptures invariably speak of it. The Saviour dwelt in that glory; but he describes it not. He calls heaven simply *my Father's house.* John xiv. The apostle Paul was carried up to it, and what says he of it? "He heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter." 2 Cor. xii, 4. St. John beheld it in his enraptured visions, and how does he develope it? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John iii, 2.

I address two classes, those neglecting this glory, and those seeking it.

1. *Those neglecting this glory.* How inexpressible, how mournful your folly! Look at the conduct of men wise for this world. Where it is a mere temporal advantage, some employment, some better situation, how vigilant and circumspect, how active and how patient also will they be! Ah! men even run with more violence to death and hell,

than Christians to life and glory. But surely that which emphatically is folly, is madness worse than chained lunacy, is to neglect this great salvation. Think you that any who reach heaven regret any losses or any sacrifices for reaching that glory. No, they cry—"O sweet losses, O blessed sacrifices, which God in love called me to! by these he made me meet for this glory!" Do any say, "I too wish to see this glory." There are two grand impediments, your guilt and your unfitness. But the Gospel shows you how both may be removed. Believe in the Lord Jesus, and so shall all your guilt be forgiven, according to the promise, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" thus shall you be among those, "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Heb. x, 17—19. Ask also for the aid of the Holy Spirit, by whom your unfitness will also be removed, your heart truly converted, and you made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

Christians seeking this glory. O my brethren, why do we spend so few thoughts upon it? Is there this exceeding and eternal weight of glory before us? O let us often and deeply meditate upon it. If ever you want a subject for contemplation, here you have one of the richest and fullest of animating hope. The bridegroom longs to be united to his bride; the heir longs to be of age to receive his inheritance; the merchant longs for the return of his richly-freighted vessel. O let us long to enter that city of the great king, of which such glorious things are spoken—and seeing it is our chief good, our last home, our everlasting felicity, let our affections be set upon it, our conversation be there already, and we, as strangers and pilgrims, pressing on, till through the gates we enter in, to dwell there for ever.

SERMON XV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH.

Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ: Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.—1 *Cor. xv*, 57, 58.

Having explained those all important subjects which have successively been brought before you in preceding discourses, I purpose now to consider the Christian's victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, and the duty of Christian steadfastness arising from that victory.

My object is to bring forward those great principles which under divine grace tend to perseverance and fruitfulness in every good work. We have formed among us many excellent Societies. I cannot but have some fears, though I trust that they may be groundless, lest a change in the ministry should, at least for a season, interfere with or impair their usefulness. You have been hearing for several sabbaths the most solemn subjects discussed, and I hope, not without some impressions of their importance; but lest those impressions should be merely transient and unprofitable, I would once more labour to establish and confirm your minds in the purpose of steady adherence to the Gospel of Christ, and an abounding fruitfulness in his service. May our God prosper the effort for these ends. We will consider—

1. The victory given to the believer,

2. The practical influence which it should have,

3. The certain recompense of all our labours.

1. The victory given to the believer.

Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We lately considered the subjects of

the everlasting happiness of God's people. Between us and that happiness there are many intervening obstacles; many difficulties to be surmounted, many enemies to be encountered, many conflicts to be maintained with them, and final victory to be gained over them.

In considering the victory given to the believer, let us notice, 1, our enemies; 2, the conquest over them; 3, for whom the conquest is made; and 4, to whom it is to be ascribed.

1. *Our enemies.*

The Apostle had been speaking in all the glow of a fervent spirit of the triumphant resurrection of the righteous, and the accomplishment thereby of the saying, "death is swallowed up in victory." In an animated figure he personifies and addresses death and the grave,—"O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, were is thy victory?" and states, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;" and then in the words of our text pours out his warm thanksgivings for the victory.

We may notice here four enemies, The Law, Sin, Death, and the Grave.

The Law is our enemy.

But is not the Law holy, just, and good? O yes, unspeakably good; and every Christian says, "Lord, how I love thy law, it is my delight all the day." It is perfectly reasonable and perfectly excellent; and to be conformed to it, will be our happiness for ever. The Law, but for sin, would not have been our enemy but our best friend. Here is one part of the unhappiness of the fall, by which that holy law designed to be the source of happiness, is become our adversary. We are all transgressors of the Law; condemnation by it is the sad and wretched consequence of transgression. The curse of its violation is upon us, and its purity therefore, instead of being our delight, is our terror and our hatred. O fearful state in which the excellencies of God's perfect Law become only so many grounds of our condemnation!

Sin is our enemy—In fact the one enemy, the chief enemy, for all might be included in this, and all others are enemies only because we have yielded to sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." It is doing what God has forbidden, and omitting to do what he has required; and could we see it as it is, we should see it to be compounded of ignorance, pride, rebellion, infatuation, and madness; by sin the subject opposes himself to the King; the son to the Father, and the creature to the Creator. Sin is man's contradiction to the will, nay his defiance of the authority of his Maker. Sin is the introducer of all sorrow and pain, sickness, disease, and death, and is the very sting of all these. It makes the holy God justly displeased with us. It arrays his truth and justice against us, and all his perfect attributes are insulted by it. Yet we have all bowed down before, and served sin; admitted him into our very bosoms, and he has us by nature so completely in his grasp that we are his slaves, (John viii, 34,) and his sons "the children of disobedience. Eph. ii, 2.

Death is our enemy. This is the enemy which follows in the path of sin, and we fall under his power as we have sinned—first, sin, then death. "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and all having sinned, the whole human race yields to this irresistible enemy. Wherever sin prepares the way for him, he comes on with steady, determined, unwavering, and unerring step, till with one terrible stroke, he removes and brings the criminal into the immediate presence of the judge eternal. Who has not dreaded this enemy, and who shall not grapple with him? and who that is truly wise will not consider the means of victory over him?

The Grave is our enemy. It completes the work of the destruction of the body which death began. It dissolves the mortal fabric and mingles human flesh with the dust from which it was formed; "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." It brings those bodies, of which we took such care, lest a breath of air should injure them, or the least hurt befall them, into an alliance, the most close and intimate, with all that is base and humiliating! "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother, and my sister." What an enemy is this! what a subjugation is here!

Christians, as well as worldly men, have to do with these enemies. The grave is "the house appointed for all living." Christians like others must die; "it is appointed to men once to die." Christians have sin dwelling in them, and Christians are transgressors of God's holy law, and as transgressors justly exposed to its penalty.

How important then is it for us all to know the way of conquering these enemies! Let us then consider,

2. *The conquest over these enemies.*

God "giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Jews expected a conquering Messiah: but they looked with the eye of the carnal mind—and hoped for one who would subdue the Romans, deliver them from earthly foes, and raise them to the highest degree of worldly greatness, exalting them to be the chief among the nations. O how poor such a victory! How little such triumphs! How wretched might their nation have been, had their vain expectations of earthly greatness been fulfilled; while Pharisaic pride and self-righteousness, and Sadducean infidelity and sensuality were left unconquered, and thus they were still in bondage under their worst and most serious enemies! Our Saviour told them of a better deliverance: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Jesus Christ is a conquering Saviour, but he has contended not with man's imaginary, but with his real enemies. He has blotted "out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Col. ii. 14, 15.

As to the law of God—he suffered to the very uttermost all its righteous penalties, enduring its extreme curse in our place. For this end "he was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law;" and this work he fully accomplished: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Gal. iii. 13. But he had not only to recover us from under the law as an enemy, but to make that law our friend, our justifier, our title to life eternal; and this he also accomplished. "Think not," he says, "I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For, verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one title shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matt. v. 17, 18. He wrought out a perfect righteousness by an exact conformity of life to every requirement of the Divine law; and this righteousness is available before God, for, and imputed to every believer. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."

As to sin, he extracted that deadly sting with which this our chief enemy wounds and destroys. God "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He "himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and "his blood cleanseth from all sin." And not only has he removed the guilt of sin, but he has broken its power, and made it hateful to the believer, who now, by the grace of Christ, delights in the law of God after the inner man, and, by the power of the Spirit, is enabled to mortify sin, and grow in grace and holiness.

As to death also, the Christian's conquest is and shall be complete. Jesus our Redeemer came "to deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It was his gracious determination, "I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues." Hosea xiii. 14. Hence, he has changed the very character of death. It is now to fall asleep in Jesus; (Acts vii. 60.) "to die is gain." Phil. i. 21. It is numbered among our privileges. 1 Cor. iii. 22. And so far from being a terror to the believer: in his best state of mind, he says, "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ." It unveils to him the very sum and substance of all his hopes. How shall I describe it? My brethren, it is the friendly hand that draws aside the veil which hides from us the Saviour. Death discovers us to Immanuel in his

eauty, and leads us where we shall be with him for ever; and, when he has executed his office for all the elect of God, eath shall himself be cast into the lake f fire, and destroyed for ever. Jesus lying and entering in his own person the egions of the dead, "through death has lestroyed him that had the power of leath, that is the devil," and has lighted ip all the gloomy vale; he also goes vith his people, when they pass through he valley, so that they need fear no evil.

As to the grave, true it is the house appointed for all living, but the Saviour penetrated its recesses. His own body ay in the silent tomb, that the grave itself might be sanctified to every one of his followers. He undertook our cause against this enemy. "I will ransom hem from the power of the grave—O grave, I will be thy destruction." Hosea. xiii, 14. And now what is the grave but the seed-plot or nursery which prepares the body sown in it for a beautiful and glorious resurrection. True, it may seem buried, and for a season lost; but t shall "revive as the corn," and come forth no longer a vile but a glorious body, to flourish for ever in the courts of our God.

O blessed Jesus, what tongue can tell our obligations to thee! How wonderful thy love! all thy people's enemies are subdued by thee, and what shall separate us from thy love! In all earthly troubles "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." And the Apostle who says this, adds the blessed assurance—"I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

3. *For whom the Conquest is made.* It is made for true believers in Christ Jesus. The Apostle had been dwelling on the resurrection of the righteous. He is speaking simply of those who are united to Christ by a living faith, and one with him. The unconverted partake not of this victory; they remain under the power of their spiritual enemies. Our victories over the varied temptations of this world are obtained by faith in Jesus. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." It is by the same faith we gain our great victory over that everlasting destruction which we had merited by our sins. "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." And so in all other spiritual conquests, it is only the believer who can truly adopt the words of our text, or that triumphant expression, "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

It is of faith, that it might be by grace. Faith is from the operation of the Divine Spirit in the heart of man. Ephes. i, 19. Faith cordially credits the divine testimony concerning the Saviour, and receives him as revealed in the word, and wholly relies upon him. This faith is "the faith of God's elect." Titus i, 1. Whom God "hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii, 13.

Faith gratefully welcomes the rich blessings, which Jesus has procured for us. Pure water from the fountain is not more refreshing to the thirsty man, than are the conquests of Jesus over spiritual enemies to the soul, wearied and burdened by sin. There is a finished and complete salvation in the Lord Jesus for the worst of sinners; there is a full victory over man's mightiest enemies. Faith says, "I believe the Divine declaration. I know my God would not, could not deceive me. I venture therefore my everlasting interest, my all through eternity, on Jesus. I cast my sinful soul on Him, on Him alone for complete salvation."

Oh unbelievers, the enemies we have mentioned are yet to you in their full strength. The Law condemns you; sin is proved upon you; the sting of death has all its sharpness; the grave is to you like the prison door, through which you will be led to a shameful and finally ruinous execution. Ah! I fear lest, after all that has been declared among you, that to some within these walls, death and the grave are still unvanquished enemies, and retain their dominion. The

penalty of the Law is over you, sin in all its fascinating fatal power enchains you. You have not fled to Jesus, and where else can the sinner find out one ray of true hope! O that I could prevail with you, now at length to sue for pardon! Once again I make known to you that there is a proclamation of grace and mercy to sinners; there is a full and free pardon for the wicked forsaking his way. I come in the Divine Saviour's name; by his authority I am commissioned to address you. By virtue of the office entrusted to me I once more declare in your ears the fulness of redeeming love —the completeness of the salvation in Jesus—the free forgiveness through him of all sin—and the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to all that ask in his name. I earnestly, I affectionately call you to come to Christ. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Not one of you within the sound of my voice will be able in the great day of judgment to say that the rich grace of the Gospel was not set before you, that an invitation was not made to you, that a gracious declaration of salvation by grace through faith was never proclaimed in your ears. O hear, and your soul shall live.

Believers in Christ, for you the conquest has been made. My office is to comfort you. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished and that her iniquity is pardoned." If the prophets had so to address the Jews, how much more may we speak to you in similar language! Look at the triumphs of your Saviour. All enemies shall be put under his feet. However broken and burdened you may be, though weak as a bruised reed, however small the spark of divine grace, even as the smoking flax, rely on the faithful promise, "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory; and in his name shall the Gentiles trust." Matt. xii, 20, 21. We hope that many here can with truth and feeling say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory."

4. *The Praise to be given for this Victory.*

Thanks be to God which giveth us victory.

If we attain the victory, it was not our choice, but God's grace, that made us to differ from others. It was not our native good disposition, it was not our native free will, it was not our better discernment and superior excellence that led us to seek and receive these blessings. O! we should have forfeited them over again, if left to ourselves. We should have spurned them from us as of no value, or only an insult to our pride and self-sufficiency. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us. It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

I know that the experience of the Christian coincides with what I say when I thus speak. I may appeal, beloved brethren in Christ, to your own consciences, that you have a feeling corresponding to that which I express, when I say, that it is not our good will, our goodness, our natural choice, that led us to embrace the overtures of mercy; rather we disliked the free grace as offensive to our pride, we hated the purity of the Gospel as contrary to our lusts, and nothing but our absolute necessity, as discovered to us by the teaching of the Spirit, led us to come, if we have come, as poor helpless sinners, for free and complete salvation. We then can say with the Apostle, "Thanks be to God." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

And surely, my brethren, the Christian life is one of constant thanksgiving. Oh! when we contemplate our totally ruined state; when we see what we have justly merited by our multiplied acts of rebellion; when, even after we have known the way of righteousness, (2 Pet. iii, 20,) we cannot but be deeply sensible how often we have walked unworthy of our high vocation; how ungrateful we have been, how forgetful of God; how often we have backslidden from him; how cold are our affections, and how dull our services at the best; that

while God is daily loading us with benefits, we have a rebellious and revolting heart, and he pities us, and spares, and pardons, and receives us again into the embraces of his love, and lifts up the light of his countenance upon us; surely our hearts must be touched with all this love. We cannot but feel the force of the passage, "I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." Ezek. xvi, 62, 63. What but infinite and everlasting love could bear with such sinners as we are. And then when we view the wonderful deliverance provided for us, that it is all of sovereign grace—that it is effected in that all-wondrous and surprising way of God's not sparing his own Son, but sending him to be born, to grow up, to live and to die for us—when we consider yet farther what the blessings are which he has procured for us: the returning favour of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and not only deliverance from, and victory over sin and death, the grave and hell, but blessings far above calculation or expression in the sight, and glory, and enjoyment of God, in bliss unutterable throughout eternity; O once believe this and the fire will kindle within, and your hearts will burn with grateful emotion, and you will burst forth in the expressions of Paul, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" or in those of David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

O my brethren, I long to see you all partakers of the enjoyment of these happy and grateful feelings; in every thing giving thanks; and constrained by gratitude and love to live to him who poureth his benefits so richly around you. May the Divine Spirit raise every one of you to this blessed state of mind.

SERMON XVI.

CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS.

Thanks be to God which giveth us victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.—1 *Cor.* xv. 57, 58.

We proposed to consider, 1. The victory given to the believer. 2. The practical influence which it should have; and 3. The certain recompense of all our labour.

In considering the victory given to the believer, I pointed out,—1. Our enemies; 2. The conquest over them; 3. For whom the conquest is made; and 4. To whom the praise is to be given.

The victory of Christ is the grand motive to Christian steadfastness. The word *therefore*, in our text, shows that there is a close connection between the victory and the practical influence. What is the effect so great a victory should have upon us; what should be the influence of such amazing love? *therefore be ye steadfast.* The word *therefore*, connects this passage with the whole preceding chapter. It is like a burning glass, which collects the sun's rays into a narrow compass, and thus increases their intensity and vigour. The Apostle had in the preceding part of the chapter insisted upon and illustrated the resurrection of believers. He had stated how the whole face of nature showed the possibility of our resurrection; he had declared the connection between the resurrection of Christ, and that of his people; he had shown how the martyrdom of Christians confirmed the same doctrine. By the figure of one star differing from another star in glory, he had farther explained its glorious character. He had beautifully contrasted our fallen body with that spiritual and incorruptible body that should be raised from the

grave. He had lastly pointed out the victory which Christ had obtained for us over all our enemies. And he now brings all the force of these various considerations to bear on this one point: Seeing that there is such a resurrection —that there is such a glory before you —that it is so confirmed—that there are such triumphs to be shared: "be steadfast, unmoveable, and always abound in the work of the Lord."

And to the force of persuasive eloquence, he joins all the tenderness of love, when he says, *my beloved brethren.* It is not a common expression. St. Paul to the Philippians uses similar words; generally it is *brethren, my brethren*, but here carried away by the magnitude of the subjects which he had been considering, and urged on by the strength of his affection for the Corinthians, he uses the most tender terms to constrain them, by love, to Christian steadfastness.

It is by this motive also that I do especially desire to influence you to this important duty. By all the affection that has subsisted between us as minister and people, by all those endearing seasons which we have had in assembling ourselves together for public worship; by our communion meetings before the Lord's Supper; and our communion together with our common Saviour at that holy table; I exhort you, be "steadfast, unmoveable, and always abound in the work of the Lord." Sure I am, that in seeking to quicken you to this, I aim at your highest happiness. Sure I am, that when we meet, as I trust many of us shall meet, in a happier world, you will not then think I over estimated the importance of the duty to which I now call you. But let us proceed to consider,

2. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE which the victory, given to believers, should have upon them.

Be ye steadfast, and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Here are three things; steadfastness, unmoveableness, and abounding labours.

1. *Steadfastness.*

This seems more immediately to refer to personal constancy, in maintaining our Christian profession against assaults from our corrupt nature within, as *unmoveable* does to assaults from without. O my brethren, when I look at the many attacks to which you are exposed, in an ensnaring world, from a subtle adversary, and from a corrupt heart, if I have any desire for your best interest, I cannot but press the exhortation, *Be ye steadfast.*

Be steadfast in maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel. You have heard those doctrines; I conclude, from your voluntary attendance here, that you have approved them, and I am persuaded that many of you have embraced them cordially. The doctrines which I have preached, have exhibited the sovereignty and equity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in all his dealings; his infinite tenderness, his unspotted purity and holiness, and his boundless love; they have shown you our total ruin by nature and through sin; the divine counsel planning salvation before time began, and in the fulness of time accomplishing the redemption of a lost world by Christ Jesus; the election of God's chosen people in Christ unto holiness, before the foundation of the world; their regeneration by his Spirit, and their free justification through his blood, adoption into the family of God, sanctification by the Spirit, manifested in the life of faith, hope, and love; preservation to the end, by the power of God through faith; resurrection from the dead, the future judgment, the condemnation of the wicked to hell, and the admission of the righteous to heaven. The doctrines have been those for which the martyrs were burned at the stake, which our reformers sealed with their blood, and have embodied in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of our Church. Now I exhort you to a steadfast adherence to these doctrines. As the Apostle exhorts the Colossians, so would I exhort you: "Continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope which ye have heard;....but as ye have received Christ Jesus, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith." Col. i, 23; ii, 6, 7. As the first Christians "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine," (Acts ii, 42,) so do you continue stead-

fast in the same doctrine. It is my hearty desire and prayer that none of you may fall away from the love of the truth; it is my fervent wish for you, that you may hold fast the profession of faith without wavering. O it is affecting to see those, who once did run well, hindered by some worldly lust, declining and drawing back even to perdition. "Thou standest," O Christian, "by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

Be steadfast in Christian fellowship. The first Christians continued steadfast, not only in the Apostles' doctrine, but also in the Apostles' "fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers." I believe many of you have known this holy and happy communion, and I can address you as "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Ephes. ii, 19. O continue in that holy fellowship. I believe that a truly Christian fellowship has existed amongst us; a fellowship which has been greatly promoted by our Religious Societies, our Schools, and Missionary and District Visiting Society meetings, and more especially by our monthly communion meetings. Let these meetings be increased, rather than diminished; but especially let the love of all, one towards each other, increase and abound more and more.*

Be steadfast too in a *Christian conversation.* I beseech you, decline not from the holy practice of the Gospel of Christ. We so soon slip into habits of worldliness, or self-indulgence, or display! But "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; and walk worthy of your high vocation." Often refresh your minds with a view of the triumphs and victories of Christ, and the glory to which he will exalt you, not to kindle an unholy pride, but to animate your endeavours after a conversation "becoming the Gospel of Christ." The Christian is eminently seen in his holy, meek, and loving, and humble tempers, in the laborious and diligent discharge of his varied duties, and in his patient continuance in well-doing. He joins together apparently opposite things, speed and patience, fulfilling the direction, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us: and diligence in his worldly business, with devotedness to God, "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

2. *Unmoveableness.*

This refers to the various outward assaults with which the Christian's graces will be tried. Many temptations will befall him. You must, as Christians, go through trouble, and trouble on account of your religion. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." You will be assailed by threatenings and hard words, and cruel mockings, perhaps from those you love most strongly; you will be allured, on the other hand, more powerfully by smiles and kindness. Let not faith fail. Faith can easily begin and go a little way, but when we meet with trials and persecutions for "the word's sake, by-and-by we are offended." Peter's faith enabled him to go on the sea, but it did not stand the buffeting of the winds and the swelling of the waves: he would have sunk, but for the helping hand of his Saviour.

I would guard you against novelties in religion—shun them as a great snare. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls." When I notice the reply to this, "they said, We will not walk therein," and look at the peculiar character of the present

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* The beautiful prayer in the Communion Service is peculiarly adapted to the occasion when it is offered; and is so suited to this part of the subject, that I cannot but quote it.

"Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs, through hope of thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of thy dear Son. And we most humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works, as thou hast prepared for us to walk in, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen."

day, I feel it my duty here especially to warn you. There will always be novelties in religion; but remember the apostolic direction, "Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." All the great truths of religion are old and known. They are contained in the confessions of every Protestant church, and they are attested by the blood of martyrs. It has been my aim to preach them in season and out of season; the substance is salvation by the grace of Christ through faith unto holiness, and I would adopt the Apostle's words, as far as I have preached the Gospel of Christ: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so I now say again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." For if he who spreads poison under the name of healing medicine, and destroys the bodies of men without number, be an abomination, how much more he who poisons the soul with falsehood. "Take heed then that no man deceive you," as our Lord has told you, adding, "for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many." Matt. xxiv, 4, 5. Try every thing by the word of God, let your mind yield wholly to the sacred record, only pray much that the Spirit may "guide you into all truth," and that you be not deceived by the subtilty of Satan, who "is transformed into an angel of light," and whose "ministers also are transformed into the ministers of righteousness." 2 Cor. xi, 14, 15.

3. *Abounding labours.*

Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

The Apostle does not mean that any good works are more than we ought to do; the Bible knows nothing of works of supererogation; but he means a holy diligence, and an abundant fruitfulness in every good word and work.

Now notice the work of the Lord, and the abounding in that work.

The *work of the Lord* is whatever our Saviour Christ calls us to. The first part of it is to attend to our everlasting interests. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." John vi, 17. The interests of your own soul are your first interests. And here forget what is behind, and reach forth to what is before, and press with all eagerness "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." In this work faith is a leading part. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi, 29. Then follows love. "Faith worketh by love." The work of the Lord must all spring from, and be animated by love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. These principles will lead you faithfully to fulfil your duties towards your fellow-creatures; and, acting on these principles, there is not one duty, however humble, in which you are not doing the work of the Lord. When the Apostle speaks of servants obeying their masters, he says, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ." O Christians! what a glory this sheds around all your daily labours; Christ regards all as serving him. "To visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," is another part of this work. Labouring also for advancing the kingdom of Christ, and all efforts to diffuse his Gospel, come under this character. St. Pauls tells Timothy in the next chapter, "Timothy worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do." 1 Cor. xvi, 10. So again attention to means of grace; O I beseech you, neglect not prayer and reading the Scriptures, self-examination, and observing the sabbath day. Such is the work to which our God calls you; he is your rightful Lord and Master; yield then a cheerful and glad obedience

to Him; it is your highest wisdom, honour, and happiness.

But what is *the abounding in this work*?

The Scriptures dwell much on this. St. Paul not only here, but often elsewhere presses it. He tells the Thessalonians, "we beseech you, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more:" and he prays for them, "the Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all men." 1 Thess. iii, 12. iv. 1. St. Peter enters into more particulars, "giving all dilligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Brethren, a Christian's life is no idle life; he is full of plans and efforts to do good. He should not need to be stirred up, but himself should stir up others. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The expression *always* should not pass unnoticed,—always abounding. At all seasons, in youth, middle life, and old age, in health and sickness, in poverty and riches, in trouble and prosperity; each season has its appropriate work in which the Christian should abound to the glory of his heavenly master. The Christian will always have work enough to do, and need never find time hang heavy upon him, but rather will hardly find the day long enough for his work. Brethren, I call you always to be zealously affected in a good thing; never yield to a slumbering, drowsy, negligent way of getting through your work, but gird up your minds to a steady, diligent, hearty fulfilment of all your Christian duties.

And, do you ask how all these are to be discharged? I tell you frankly, you have no strength of your own; you have no sufficiency in yourselves; but you have sufficient grace in the Lord Jesus, and "can do all things through Christ strengthening" you. Then shall you be "steadfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," when you are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Only seek help of God; when the Apostles were threatened by the Jewish council, and forbid to speak in the name of Jesus I am struck with their conduct, they do not even ask for safety and protection, their prayer is, "now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word. Acts iv, 29. Here is the true source of the Christian's strength, to do and to suffer the will of God. Wait only on the Lord.

Do you want motives?—consider,

3. The certain recompense of all our labours.

Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

It is the grand and animating spring of all exertion, that there should be an adequate return for our labour. But how often in worldly things are men's hopes disappointed! the tradesman lays out his capital, and time, and talents; and then his hopes, after all, of earthly remuneration may be disappointed. But in the service of Christ, "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

Nor does this recompense in any way interfere with salvation and grace. It is not on the ground of merit in man, but mercy in God. The more we do for God, the more we owe to God, and therefore for all our works we are rather debtors than deservers. But O how wonderful is that grace which first disposes and enables us to work, and then rewards us for working!

It was to the "recompense of the reward" that Moses "had respect" when he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." This supported the Apostles in all their afflictions, and comforted the martyrs in the flames.

What is the return then that Christians receive for their steadfast labours? There is a present recompense, and a future recompense.

A present recompense. No act of love to Christ goes without even a present recompense. David says, speaking of God's commands, "in keeping them there is great reward." Ps. xix, 11. There is an inward peace of mind and satisfaction that is its own reward, and not unfrequently temporal blessings follow a Christian life; the specific object of our labours is realized, and we see with our own eyes the blessed effects of devotedness to Christ; for "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." Yet we admit that, in God's sovereignty, it is sometimes otherwise. The Apostles went through such temporal afflictions that they said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." But even in this case such rich spiritual blessings are given, patience and resignation, faith, hope, love, and humility grow and increase so much, as to make the Christian say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted.....as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as having nothing and yet possessing all things." O the sweet sense of pardon and peace, the near access to God, and the communion with him in suffering times have been such as to make many a suffering Christian bless God for the cross, as his greatest mercy.

And then "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." For consider,

The future recompense.

The expression is here, as is very usual with the sacred writers, of a general kind. The Apostle tells the Hebrews in a similar manner, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shown towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister." So our Lord says, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of the least of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." The expressions of a recompense are quite general. They do not enter into any minute descriptions of the crowns of life and glory which they wear, or the bliss they shall enjoy. If you ask what this future recompense is, I reply, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be.....Eye hath not seen it, ear hath not heard it, the heart of man hath not conceived it." To me, my brethren, these expressions convey infinitely richer ideas of the heavenly reward, than if every word of bliss and glory that human language can invent or multiply, had been employed to describe it. It is a glorious happiness of perfect knowledge, purity, and joy. It is to be like God, and to be ever with him; and the Bible tells you no more about it, because it is inconceivably great and glorious.

O glorious recompense, everlasting, incorruptible, and undefiled; may you, my brethren, obtain it! O that I may but be helpful in bringing any of you to desire and to seek it! It is not a vain thing, it is your life.

Nor need the real Christian have a doubt here; the Apostle says, "forasmuch as ye know:" so in another place he says, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle fail, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Christians should have a present assurance of hope of their future recompense. They have the earnest of their heavenly inheritance in the gifts of the Spirit here below, by that Spirit they are sealed unto the day of redemption, and soon, very soon, they shall have the full sight and enjoyment of the promised reward.

All this is "in the Lord," as every promise is "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." It is for his sake, through his mediation and to his glory, and well may an assurance founded on Christ, be solid. "Whoso believeth in him shall never be confounded." If the assurance rest ultimately on any thing short of the Lord Jesus, it is not built on the true foundation.

I have now, my brethren, for several Sundays been pleading with you on the most important of all events. Your increasing interest and attention fill me with hope that my labours may have been profitable to you. O that in the last great day it may be found that one and another may have been impressed, and convinced, and converted, truly con-

verted to God; and that when the Lord then shall number his people, it may be said of our Zion, "this and that man was born in her." Ps. lxxxvii, 5.

We shall not see much more of each other in this world. This voice will but seldom again reach your ears. O unconverted sinner, going on in thy worldly course, with my last breath would I entreat thee to pause and return to the Lord. O my beloved brethren in the Lord, my joy and crown, with my last breath, I would beseech you, be "steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

SERMON XVII.

FIRST FAREWELL SERMON.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.—2 *Cor. xiii*, 11.

Had I consulted merely my own personal feelings, I should not have attempted this day to preach parting sermons to you. Interesting and endearing has been our connection as minister and people; now for about fourteen years I have ministered here, and this has hitherto been the only cure of souls that I have had since God called me to the ministry. You have borne with my many infirmities, and my frequent absences; you have gathered around me, and strengthened my hands in every good work, and many a grateful recollection, the review of our past intercourse revives. To sever these ties is one of the sorest trials which I feel in my present situation and prospects.

To sever them—no—I feel that they never can be severed! The past will still afford sweet reflections in this world. I do trust also, it will have been found to be, to many of you, profitable not only for time, but both for time and eternity. Ties have been here cemented between us, which will last forever. Time is short, eternity is at hand, and all earthly separations are but for a moment.

I cannot however but entertain the hope that such a season as the present may be improved to your spiritual advantage, and in this hope I would lay aside personal consideration, and bend my whole aim to further your highest good, and for this purpose I have chosen the valedictory address of the Apostle to the church at Corinth. Let us consider,

1. The circumstances in which it was made,
2. The practical directions it contains,
3. The parting good wish it expressed,
4. The promise with which it concludes.

1. The circumstances in which this parting address was made.

Corinth was a great and rich city, the capital of Achaia, with an extended commerce. It was one of the most considerable cities of Greece, and given up to idolatry and vain pleasures. The Apostle had received one of the most encouraging assurances from the Lord, "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city," and thus encouraged he laboured there about two years; a flourishing church of Christ was formed; which came behind no church in spiritual gifts, being "enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge."

But after the Apostle's departure, false teachers crept in; heresies and divisions spread amongst them; some fell into sin; one into grievous iniquity; the Lord's supper was grossly profaned, and there was danger lest this lately flourishing church should speedily decline and become corrupt. The Apostle writes two divinely inspired Epistles, full of heavenly wisdom and holy affections, to recover them, and to be a standing instruction for the whole church of God in after ages; he closes his second Epistle with the parting address which we have now to consider.

Though many of your circumstances are different, yet there are points of similarity of which I would avail myself. I will first present to your attention the circumstances of Christian congregations in great cities, and then the circumstances of the times in which we live.

1. *The circumstances of congregations in great cities* are such as to be

attended with many snares to the soul. There is the wear and tear of constant, bustling, distracting and multiplied occupations, with the little time that can be gained for the all-important duty of calm, retired, and close communion with God and our own hearts.

The general mass of the population of such a city as this is wholly immersed in the world and the things of the world; "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life" are those things which mainly occupy the thoughts and cares of its inhabitants. O it is fearful to look at the congregated amount of a million and a half of men here assembled within a few miles of each other, and to be satisfied, on palpable evidence, that a great, if not the greater part, neglect public worship, and thus live as without God in the world. How immense are the multitudes of men of this world here acting upon each other, exciting, irritating, fretting and corrupting each other more and more. Here is the chief seat of the infidelity of England; its most vain-glorious, daring, and blasphemous advocates here strengthen each other by uniting together under Satan, their chief, for the destruction of man. Here the Romanist also can securely entrap and beguile unstable souls with all the arts of "the mother of abomination." Here the ambitious have full scope and play in every department of life for applying all their talents and resources to obtain the pageant of this world's greatness and glory. Here the covetous may especially "rise up early and late take rest," and accumulate his miserable idols, this world's gold and silver, till death take all from him, and he shall carry nothing away with him but the canker and the rust to witness against him. Here also the literary may pursue, to the utmost limits of human research, their studies after the wisdom of this world. In fact, all who love this world have in this vast metropolis, the seat of their empire; and their minds, and cares, and conversation, are wholly engrossed by the continual and busy occupation which their accumulated numbers and advantages here give them.

Now the flock of Christ is a little flock in the midst of all this worldliness. Bought by the blood of Jesus, called by his grace out of this evil world, and quickened by his Spirit, his people "come out and are separate" from a world lying in wickedness. Like the burning bush seen by Moses, it is preserved by divine power, in the midst of the flames, unconsumed. The Church is in truth the salt that preserves the whole from destruction. O brethren, may you ever be as "the salt of the earth," and may this salt never lose its savour. O may you never even for a season be again incorporated with and become like that mass of worldliness from which you have been taken. Rather may you be honored of God in turning many around you from darkness to light, that they also with you may obtain an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

The circumstances of the times are peculiar.

My brethren, we live in remarkable times; one of those æras which may well be called critical. Just at the time when the Apostles first diffused the Gospel of Christ, or when the Reformation revived the Gospel, were each a crisis, so is the present day a crisis in the history of the world. God has been marvellously at work, stirring up his people to enlarged efforts to diffuse his Gospel; and Satan has been marvellously at work intending to hinder, yet unconsciously helping forward, the triumphs of the gospel.

Yet is there much in the church, and in the world, that may appal the stoutest heart, and lead to deepest humiliation and prayer.

Many of us can remember the outbreaking of the first French Revolution, and the changes it produced throughout Europe. We have lived to see a second Revolution, still more portentous in its signs, and likely in its progress to affect every civilized nation. It is manifest that the foundations of the earth are out of course, the pillars of it are tottering, and God is shaking every thing, and uprooting the ancient things, that that kingdom which cannot be shaken may be established. God is using implements that he will lay aside when they have accom-

plished his work. We see the loosening of the soil about every plant—we see the trembling and waving of the deeply-rooted trees of evil, and we are sure that our Lord's word must be realized. Popery, Infidelity, Mahomedanism, Paganism, Superstition, merely nominal Christianity, and in the words of Christ, "every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

And when, after taking this general view, we look at our own country in particular, the Christian's heart must feel that there is much to be anxious for about the best interests of England.

The characteristic of our times is eminent ungodliness in men who yet bear the Christian name. They deny not the faith in general in open avowal of their unbelief, they call themselves Christians; but the very character of all their actions is, "There is no God."—The very spirit which animates them is a throwing off all authority and restraint, divine and human, saying, "let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." And these principles have spread to such an extent as to loosen all the former bonds of society—"there is no fear of God before their eyes."

We see this in some striking features. The Sunday newspapers, in thousands and tens of thousands, issue from the press, and in righteous punishment for the national sin of not restraining so great a violation of God's holy law, circulate principles of insubordination and contempt of authority, and diffuse the worst of poison, even poisoning the springs of men's actions; and if the fountain be bad, if the principles be corrupt, what else can be the streams? The open avowal of infidelity is another painful feature. Our more pious forefathers would indeed have been appalled, that shops for the sale of avowed infidel publications should be opened and encouraged, that the Sabbath should have its lectures in infidelity, and that periodical infidel works shouldhave free circulation and sale. Ought we not to be humbled? Will not God visit for these things?

Another feature that may excite much anxiety, is holding 800,000 of our fellow beings in slavery: after all the light that has been thrown on this subject, I consider the guilt of England as not small in still continuing unredressed so serious an evil. The Egyptians were destroyed for keeping in bondage the Israelites; and God grant us grace to deliver our slaves from bondage before our neglect calls down merited judgment upon us.

Other features of the times might be noticed, but they have in a measure been more or less the characters of every age: the spirit of drinking among the poor, the frauds in trade, the hardness of heart which calculates only the gain to be acquired, the pride, oppression, and dissipation of the higher ranks, and the insubordination, deceit, and recklessness of the lower, however, form a mass of growing national iniquity that may well fill us with sorrow and confusion of face before God.

The state of the Church of Christ will also cause much anxiety to the considerate Christian. Corinth itself had not the multiplied divisions and the contentions among brethren that London now has. I mean not among nominal Christians, nor among different denominations, but among Christians, "holding the head." It is painful indeed to see the multitudes that are carried away by every wind of doctrine, and that seek after novelties, as if something new was to be discovered in Christianity. Faith, hope, and love, the substance of all experimental truth, and Christ crucified, the sum of saving knowledge, are neglected for speculative refinements and uncertain views of futurity. Others again are carried away by the love of criticism and new canons of interpretation into the very regions of infidelity. Hence also a dangerous reaction, leading to the neglect of sound criticism, the despising of prophesyings, and shutting the mind against growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

When I look at these things I am reminded of our Saviour's words to his disciples, and I would address them to you: "Will ye also go away?" I am afraid lest any, especially of the younger part of my flock, of whose ardent zeal and devotedness I have had many proofs,

should be led away by those who, though pious men, hold and are zealous to propagate new theories in religion, as if there could be a superior way of life than the meek, contrite, humble, and loving way arising from the Spirit's work on the heart, the view of our own depravity, and the Saviour's rich grace in freely justifying and then sanctifying and making us meet for heaven. I fear lest any should become heady and high-minded, trusting in themselves that they are the temple of the Lord, and despising others.

These are sifting times; men's hearts are failing them for fear of what is coming on the earth; they are exciting times, and Christians may be carried away with the excitement; but ever remember Christ's words, "My kingdom is not of this world;" ever act on Solomon's direction, "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change." Prov. xxiv, 21.

True it is that any thing is better than a general torpor and death in religion, and self-satisfaction in that torpor and death; and the very excitement of the present day shows that there is great good going on, yet many peculiar temptations beset the Christian at such times, and those who would avoid them must walk closely with God, and wait constantly upon him.

2. The practical directions given.

Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace.

Here are four plain practical directions. May the Lord enable me duly to set them before you.

Be perfect.

Be entire and complete. Be consistent throughout; a thorough Christian walking worthy of the Gospel. This includes the whole practical walk of the Christian.

The root of this perfection is only in the Lord Jesus Christ and our union with him. As we are one in Christ we are perfect. "Ye are complete in him." You are witnesses how constantly your minds have been directed to Him, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. All your justification is in him who is made of God unto you righteousness. All your adoption is in him; "to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." All your sanctification is by him. "He is made of God unto us sanctification," as the fulness of the Spirit was received by him for sinners, and is from him communicated to them, that they may be enlightened, purified, and comforted. Never can I regret having directed you simply to the Saviour for all you need; and had I a thousand tongues, they should all speak of Christ, and direct the hearers only to him. Now abide in him.

But, if you would be perfect, while God is working "in you to will and to do of his good pleasure," you must work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Nothing is more essential to your prosperity than maintaining habitual communion with God. My beloved brethren, I beseech you to seek God in private prayer, with all diligence and patient perseverance, every morning before you go to your business, and let not this all-important work be conducted carelessly and cursorily, but earnestly and steadily. And again in the evening, it is a bad habit to defer private devotions till a late hour, when usually men become heavy and sleepy. Many Christian families have found it a good rule for the several members to retire at a fixed and early hour in the evening, for their more private devotions. The due and serious observance of family worship, including a hymn of praise, reading the Scriptures, short observations upon the portion read, and a devout prayer, is another material part of the order of a religious household walking according to the rules of the Gospel. The diligent, holy, watchful, and conscientious keeping of the Sabbath-day, is eminently needful for your soul's welfare. As is the regular attendance at the preparatory meetings,* and at the monthly and other communions around the table of the Lord, sea-

* On the Thursday before the Communion, the Author had a meeting of his communicants which he believes to have been very profitable

sons in which we have now so long together enjoyed fellowship with our Saviour, and fellowship with each other.

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to his people. He subjoins the circular which was given to the Communicants on the formation of this meeting :—

To the Communicants at Sir George Wheler's Chapel.

My Christian Friends,

Feeling deeeply the importance of fervent and united prayer, and of further intercourse with those who attend my ministry, I have considered it desirable to circulate the following address.

The relation in which a minister of Christ stands to his people is most important and interesting. He is considered in the Scriptures as the Shepherd, who is to feed the flock of Christ with the pure word of God, and to guard them with constant care; the steward, who dispenses the mysteries of Christ, and has to give account of his stewardship hereafter; and the watchman, who has continually to watch over the souls committed to his charge, and is responsible to God for his fidelity. And you, my dear friends, have immensely important interests at issue—even nothing less than those which most directly concern your present and your everlasting happiness. "Take heed how ye hear." "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is the wisdom of God and the power of God." "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." —To discharge these duties, our sufficiency, whether as minister or people, is wholly of God. Let us pray much for each other. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."

It is also important that there should be as much knowledge of each other as circumstances will admit. There are peculiar impediments, in this crowded and busy metropolis, to that full knowledge of our hearers which is so desirable, and found to be so advantageous in other situations. But it has appeared to me that something more might be done to promote a spirit of prayer and personal intercourse among us, by a monthly meeting of the Communicants. There is a special promise connected with such meetings. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name: And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

With these views, I propose holding a monthly meeting, at such place as shall be found most convenient, of such of our *regular* Communicants as may be disposed to assemble. It has been my anxious wish to have more private intercourse with the flock committed to my charge, and to see them more and more united in a spirit of Christian love. I would fain hope that such a devotional meeting, amongst other advantages, will have this beneficial tendency, that, bringing the minister and the Communicants nearer to each other, a Christian spirit will more and more abound.

I would therefore beg to mention, that, if the Lord permit, it will afford me great satisfaction to meet with such of our regular Communicants as may be willing to attend, on the *Thursday previous* to the Sacrament Sunday, in the evening, at seven o'clock precisely. The first meeting to be on *Thursday* the 29th of *October* inst. at the Chapel.

I shall feel obliged if those Communicants who purpose to attend, would previously send their names.

Believe me to remain your affectionate friend, and servant in the Lord,

EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

10, *Bransbury Park, Islington,*
October 3, 1829.

O my brethren, be not slack and negligent in private preparation for those duties; your spiritual profit in them is greatly connected with previous diligence in retired duties, in holy meditation, self-examination, humiliation, prayer, and renewed exercises of faith. My prayer for you is, "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Heb. xiii, 20, 21.

Be of good comfort.

Are any of you cast down? I believe that some of you, knowing that there has been a remarkable blessing in the last year or two of my ministry here, and that institutions have been formed among us that have been greatly prospered, have been ready to fear that these things may not go on, when the instrument in some degree used, has been removed. But why despond? remember David's resource, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Psalm xlii, 11. The same gracious God who makes use of what instruments he pleases, knows what his garden needs,

and if he lays one aside, or takes it for other work, it is only to raise another instrument that shall more completely accomplish his work. I would apply to you Jacob's consolation to Joseph; though I remove, God does not. The dying Patriarch said, "I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you to the land of our fathers."

It pleased God to bless among you a sermon upon these words, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Some, I believe, remember that sermon: now you and I are called to practise in this instance the duty there prescribed. O it is good to look wholly off the poor creature, and to glory only in the Creator. And what grounds of comfort there are for you! True, you are needy creatures; the very fulness and extent of God's promises show this, for there is no useless promise; but you cannot have a want for which there is not a supply in the promise; you cannot have a fear but there is a suitable encouragement.

Only look to your heavenly parent. O what inexpressible glories and riches and blessedness centre in Him as the ever-living and ever-flowing fountain of all good; he has all wisdom and all truth, all power and all tenderness,—all holiness, and all compassion, all majesty, and all love. With such a Father how can you despond. Be of good comfort, God is your Father.

Only look up to the Lord Jesus Christ; "the brightness of his Father's glory"—your all in all. Do you feel that you are lost, what a Saviour is here for the lost! Do you feel that you are guilty? what a Redeemer for the guilty! Do you feel that you are sinful? what a High Priest for the sinful! Are you sensible of your ignorance? O what a prophet and teacher for the ignorant! Are you thinking that you are weak and defenceless? O what a King you have; the King of kings, fully able to protect all his people. Be of good comfort, Christ is your Saviour.

Or again, if you want grounds of comfort, only look up to the Holy Spirit. He is the very Comforter of the comfortless; the teacher, the guide, the helper of the elect of God. Do you mourn under your corruption? O what a sanctifier is at hand to purify you; do you feel your deadness? O what a quickening Spirit is the Divine Spirit: only pray with David, "Thy Spirit is good, lead me in the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake." He sanctifieth all the elect people of God.

Do you doubt if you are among his elect? Go to Jesus and so make it sure. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." Do you think that he will not receive you; hear his assurance, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Do you fear that your sins cannot be pardoned?—O yes, they can, whatever they be; if you go to Christ, his blood "cleanseth from all sin: Come, now, and let us reason together, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i, 18.

Do you doubt whether you shall persevere to the end? Were this left to yourself you might well doubt, but your soul is in better hands—even "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

Do you feel the loss of earthly friends who have been a blessing to you? O think of Him who only made them to be any blessing, and who has said, "I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me."

But my heart is full, and I stop. May our God pour out his Spirit so fully upon you, that you may receive a rich blessing even in our parting sermons, and we may together devote ourselves from this day, afresh to his service. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us an everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." 2 Thess. ii, 16, 17.

SERMON XVIII.

SECOND FAREWELL SERMON.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.—2 *Cor. xiii*, 11.

I RESUME once more the consideration of St. Paul's address.

In the morning, I stated these points as included in our text. 1. The circumstances in which this farewell address was made; 2. The practical directions given; 3. The parting good wish expressed; 4. The promise added. We have already dwelt on the first part of the subject, and have also explained two of the four practical directions given. I proceed with the third practical direction.

Be of one mind.

I must say, thanking our God for this grace, that you have been remarkably so hitherto. It has been my joy and comfort to witness your unanimity. When I consider how many hindrances there are to this, how Satan delights to sow divisions among brethren, and how many corruptions in one heart tend to excite and stir up strife and contention in the hearts of many, I cannot but admire the grace of God which has united us together in the bonds of Christian love. I doubt not that God has much blessed our Religious Societies to the furtherance of this, while he has given us a spirit of union in carrying them forward. Our District Visiting Society, formed under the sanction, and with the kind assistance of the Rector of the Parish, has brought us together on the interesting Christian duty of visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Our Schools for religious Instruction, our Infant School, our Missionary Association and the other charities connected with our Chapel, have had the same effect; and in all, the spirit of Christian unity has been vouchsafed, disposing us to submit "one to another in the fear of God."*

To God be all the glory. Now "let brotherly love continue." Let the same spirit ever characterize all your intercourse with each other, and with the beloved brother who succeeds me.

To the Congregation usually attending Wheler Chapel.

My Christian Friends—

At the commencement of a new year, I desire to express my hearty gratitude to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the many mercies which have been given to us as a Congregation in the last year, and more especially for the ready liberality and affectionate interest with which you have supported various Religious Societies. Let us give, with one mind and heart, all the glory to "the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort."

Thinking it very probable that others of the Congregation would gladly join more of the charities connected with us, were they fully aware of them, and of the persons who would receive their contributions, I have determined to circulate this address with the following list of

RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES AND CHARITIES IN CONNEXION WITH WHELER CHAPEL.

1. *Wheler Chapel Church Missionary Association.*

This Association was formed in 1814. The sum raised from its formation to January 1, 1829, amounted to 1907*l.* 2s. 1d. The Collections and Subscriptions in the last year 162*l.* 10s. 6d. The subscription is one guinea a year, payable at Christmas. Mr. J. D. Kincaid, 14 White-Lion Street, is Treasurer and Secretary. There are many Collectors, who will thankfully receive small weekly, monthly, or quarterly contributions.

2. *Wheler Chapel Schools for Religious Instruction.*

These schools were formed about thirteen years ago. The children are entirely instructed by the kindness of voluntary Teachers, connected with the Congregation, and under the superintendance of the Minister. There are now one hundred and fourteen boys, and eighty girls in the Schools. The sum raised by the Collection last year was 19*l.* 15s. 10d. There have been no regular Subscriptions, but the expenses above the collection have been defrayed out of the Wheler Chapel Poor Fund. Mr. Thomas Perry, 4 Wood Street, Spitalfields, is Treasurer; and Mr. Thomas Bowler, 5 Carter Street, is Secretary.

3. *Wheler Chapal Jews' Association.*

Sermons have been preached for the Society for the Conversion of the Jews for several years past. The Collection last year amounted to 15*l.* 0s. 5 1-2d. Subscriptions will be received by Mr. Goodburns, No. 2, Union Street East.

4. *Wheler Chapel Infant School.*

This School was formed in connexion with

* The Author subjoins a circular address, giving an account of the Charities connected with the Chapel.

For this end come out from the world. Christians must now be more and more separate and distinct from an ungodly word. In the midst of all the scenes around of political and national excitement, lift up the standard of the cross, be every where decided for Christ; the more openly you wisely confess him, the more peace will you have within, and the more useful you will be among your brethren. The more bold you are for Christ, in the spirit of Christ, and according to the word of Christ, the more you will gain the love of his true disciples, and no love in this world is comparable to theirs.

Above all, beware of ungodly connexions. Let not any worldly advantages tempt you to unite yourselves in business with those who hate the Gospel. Especially let me, as a parting caution, charge my younger hearers, never to unite themselves in marriage to those whom they have not good reason to believe to be truly converted to God. The scripture rule is express, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with

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the congregation in October last. There are now eighty Infants on the books. The sum contributed has amounted to 39*l.* 7s. 6d. The subscription is half-a-guinea a year. Mr. Tibbatts, 44 Bishopsgate Without, is Treasurer; and Mr. John Hopkins, 60 High Street, Shoreditch, is Secretary.

5. *Wheler Chapel District Visiting Society.*

This Society was formed Dec. 11, 1829. The Collections and Contributions already amount to 65*l.* 15s. 1d. The object is to provide a general and systematic visitation of the Poor in that part of the parish of Christ Church, Spitalfields, committed to the Wheler Chapel District Local Committee, for the purpose of improving their temporal and spiritual condition. The district comprehends all that part of the parish of Christ Church which lies to the North of Spital Square, Lamb Street, Brown's Lane, and Montague Street, with the north sides of those streets. The subscription is half-a-guinea or upward a year. Mr. J. Hopkins, 60 High Street, Shoreditch, is Treasurer; and Mr. H. S. Gowing, 29 Mount Street, Whitechapel, is Secretary.

6. *Norton Falgate School.*

The girls educated in this School attend the Chapel, and receive instructions from voluntary Teachers connected with the congregation. There are forty-two children. There have been Collections almost yearly for them. The Collection last year was 19*l.* 5s. 9d. John Wallen, Esq, 11 Spital Square, is Treasurer; and Mr. J. D. Kincaid, 44 White Lion Street, is Honorary Secretary.

7. *Spitalfields Benevolent Society.*

This Society was formed in 1811. The members of the Wheler Chapel Congregation, from its formation, have taken an active share in its proceedings. A Collection in its behalf was made last year, amounting to 58*l.* 12s. 10d. The Stewards of the Society are Mr. Edward Suter, 19, Cheapside; Mr. J. Daughtrey, 5, Bartlett's Buildings; Mr. W. Carr, 7, Throgmorton-street. The subscription is half-a-guinea a year, or upward.

There have been also occasional collections for the following purposes:

8. *Educational Clothing Society.* 11*l.* 3s. Treasurer, Mr. E. de Caligny, 12, Cooper's Row, Trinity Square, Secretary, Mr. H. Wimbolt, 6, Wilmot Square, Bethnal Green:

9. *Spitalfields National School.* 16*l.* 10s. 4d. Sub-Treasurer, Mr. Fremont, Brown's Lane; Honorary Secretary, Rev. W. Stone, M. A. Rector, Church Street, Spitalfields.

10. Lights, &c. for *Wednesday Evening Lecturship.* 7*l.* 6s. 5 1-4d.

11. *The London Dispensary.* Sir Francies Desanges, Knt. Treasurer; and Mr. Church, 22 Spital Square, Secretary. The subscription is one guinea a year.

Those who have done most for these Societies will, I am persuaded, be the first to feel and say, "we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." Ever bear in mind, my Christian friends, the inseparable connexion between the right reception of true doctrine, and abounding fruitfulness in good works. If I am able to say to you, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast;" I shall be able also to add, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

But, indeed, I need not urge this truth on very many who have, I doubt not, *to their power*, and some *beyond their power*, assisted in our plans of doing good. May that gracious Father, "who is able to make all grace abound toward you, multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;" and may you all enjoy the full blessing promised to him "who considereth the poor."

Brethren, pray, also, *for us.*

I am, your affectionate friend,
and servant in the Lord,
EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

10 *Barnsbury Park, Islington, Jan.* 1, 1830.

The Services commence in the Chapel at the undermentioned hours:—

Sunday Morning Service, eleven, o'clock.
Afternoon Service, three o'clock,
Evening Service, half-past six o'clock.
Wednesday Evening Service, during the Winter Months, seven o'clock.

unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" Nothing has been more injurious to the soul, than ungodly connexions. Many a fair and beautiful blossom that gave rich promise of fruit, has thus been withered and blighted. Make, then, those who love the Lord Christ the companions of your choice. You cannot go out of the world, but while you are in it, be not of it. Learn the happy skill of the Christian, to live above the world while he labours on it. You must inevitably associate with worldly men, they abound on every side, but O as "strangers and pilgrims," only sojourn here, and "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." The more, however, Christians come out from needless connexion with the world, the more intimate is their communion with God, and their union and communion with each other.

4. *Live in peace.*

This is the last practical direction. The Christian is eminently a man of peace. Never was it more needful to state distinctly this character, to the Church of Christ, from dangers on all sides; dangers, on the one hand, of giving up or withholding truth; and dangers on the other hand, of speaking the truth not in love, but in pride and contention, or urging private opinions as if they were fundamental and all-essential truths of God. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." The directions on this head in the sacred Scriptures are numerous. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Matt. v. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Rom. xii, 18. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii, 14. "Seek peace, and ensue it." 1 Pet. iii, 11. Our Lord and his Apostles press this duty upon us, as if it were ever ready in this perturbed world to escape from us, and we must daily pursue it; or, in the words of St. Paul, "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Rom. xiv. 19.

It will be clear, however, even from these directions, that peace is not to be desired at the expense of religious principle. This must be retained at all cost. Truth is never to be sacrificed for peace; but "speaking the truth in love" is our happy duty. When ungodly men abuse the truths of the Gospel, we must "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." But frequently peace is needlessly broken for the gratification of some sinful passion, and it is to be maintained by the denial of self in all its many forms of self-will, self-indulgence, self-wisdom, ease, pride, and vanity. If we be true followers of peace, we shall often suffer wrongfully for the sake of peace—"if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye." 1 Pet. iii. 14. I need not tell you, my brethren, that Christians are "as sheep among wolves," and that their protection is not in an arm of flesh, but in the invisible arm of Jehovah. Be then men of peace. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Phil. ii. 14, 15.

The root of this peace, and that indeed from which alone Christian peace can grow, is a conscience purified through the blood of Jesus. If I have peace with God, if I know that the King of kings is my friend, and will make all things work for my good, it matters little what the unquiet spirits of this world do to disturb or harass me. He who can "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," is fixed on an immoveable rock. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusted in thee."

The direction, Live in peace, is very comprehensive. It embraces, first of all, peace with God; let this be maintained pure and clear—let there be nothing between God and you; and for this end continually apply afresh to "the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. Heb. xii. 24. There will then be peace within, "the peace of

God which passeth all understanding, and which shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; a sweet tranquillity of mind, calm amidst the storms and tempests of life, and composed, if not joyful in tribulation. Peace with your brethren in Christ and all your fellow-creatures, has already been noticed; but this direction embraces also our enemies. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Here is the lesson of our Divine Master; and if enabled to attain this lesson, often will you find that "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

O that the Redeemer's bequest to his Church may be yours: "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

3. The parting good wish expressed. *Finally, brethren, farewell.*

These are hard words to say where there is real love, as they imply to us absence and separation; and yet they are words full of comfort. The Christian's farewell, and the Christian minister's farewell more especially, is an expression full of hope and full of blessing. The original (χαιρετε) might be rendered *rejoice* or *be glad;* and as there is nothing which shall not minister a blessing to the child of God, so every thing may give him peace and joy. All things are in truth working for good. The meetings and partings, the absense and presence, of those dear to him, are all from the Lord, all in love, all for his good.

With regard to our own immediate circumstances, I feel that my separation from you is truly painful. When I was appointed over this congregation, I had not the slightest expectation of ever being called away. I fully expected to labour among you, as long as our Divine Master continued my health and strength. But the burden of the many duties which was upon me was very great, and it is not probable that I could much longer have sustained, without sinking under it. While my mind was much exercised on this point, it pleased a gracious Providence quite unexpectedly, to call me to another important, but less laborious sphere of duty. It was not from want of love between us as Minister and Congregation,—I believe this love was mutual, sincere, and cordial; nor was it from the failure of a blessing here,—the Lord gave, and to him alone be the glory, a rich blessing in the conversion and edification of many; nor was it from want of returns of love; from our earliest connexion to the present day, from the first marks of your welcome to the last of your affectionate remembrance,* many have been the proofs which you have given me of your love: but under the whole of my circumstances, the path of Providence appeared to me too plain to be mistaken; and I leave you because I cannot doubt God has appointed for me another scene of labour.

And now God has heard our prayers, and has raised up for you a beloved brother and a faithful minister in the Lord to succeed me. I do most heartily commend this brother to you. He will plainly, fully, and boldly preach among you the Gospel of the grace of God. I do trust and hope that he will go in and out among you with a double blessing. May our God grant this!

My circumstances now call me to say farewell. May you indeed fare well both in body and in soul, in time and in eternity. The expression farewell, comprehends my heart's wish and prayer for you all.

It includes *every needful temporal good.* I would say to each of my brethren in Christ, "Beloved, I wish above all things that you mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." May all providential dealings with you be full of loving kindness and mercy. May our God "supply all your need out of his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." May every temporal good, as far as is consistent with your higher and best good, be bestowed upon you. May our God realize in your happy experience those rich promises made to his people: "Bless-

* The Congregation had in the kindest manner sent their minister an expensive piece of plate, with an inscription testifying their affectionate regard.

ed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." Deut. xxviii, 3—6. I am sure that if you do steadily and determinately "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; all those things shall be added unto you." Devotedness to Christ is the wisest way to insure the largest measure of temporal happiness, for his "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." Fare you well in this world's blessings.

It includes a good wish also for *every spiritual blessing*: These are the chief blessings, given to God's elect, and preparing them for their heavenly home. O may you then, my brethren, all be greatly enriched with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost! May the faith of each and of every one "grow exceedingly," and your hope rise to the full assurance of hope, and your love towards God and towards each other, and to all men be yet more enlarged and inflamed. May the Holy Ghost dwell in you, and ever produce in you all his multiplied and varied fruits. May you be filled with joy and peace, gratitude and thankfulness; may contrition, and humility, and compassion, and a tender conscience, mark all your characters, and may "the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." Fare you well in spiritual good. May your souls prosper.

It includes a good wish also for *eternal blessedness*. All is infinitely short of your real happiness without this; but indeed spiritual blessings are the very meetness for heavenly and everlasting blessedness. You must be born again before you can see the kingdom of God, you must attain holiness if you would see the Lord; the title to glory is Christ's work; out of us the meetness for glory is from the work of the Spirit of Christ in us. Now "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." O my brethren, here is my chief, my best wish for you, that none of you may be wanting when God counteth up his jewels; that you may all be bound up in the bundle of life everlasting, and that all your names may be written in the Lamb's book of life. I call you to "fight the good fight, and lay hold on eternal life." And O, may our God minister to each of us "an entrance abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

4. The promise added.

The God of love and peace shall be with you. A rich promise! O may it, in all its blessedness, be yours.

There is ever a connection between holy practice and holy joy—the ways of godliness are the ways of peace. The fulfilment of the practical directions which we have been explaining, will bring a richer enjoyment of the Divine presence with all those inestimable blessings that presence ever brings. This is according to that gracious promise, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." Matt. xiii. 12. We have nothing without God, and where he gives one degree, it is a pledge to encourage us to hope for more. Attend to the practical directions, "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace," and then shall follow the blessing, "the God of love and peace shall be with you." The due exercise of grace, which itself must be traced to sovereign and free love in God, brings more grace. The Holy Spirit loves to dwell in peaceful and tranquil bosoms; he is grieved and driven away when we admit angry contentions and unholy feelings to dwell in us and rankle in our hearts. O take heed how you quench the Spirit—that holy, divine, and loving guest, that makes the body of the Christian the temple of God, from which the living waters are perpetually flowing!

To whom are we to look for the blessing? *The God of love and peace.*

What a comfort it is, my brethren, to direct you hither! A mother on parting with her children to take a distant journey, feels it an unspeakable relief to be

able to leave them with a kind and tender, with a skilful and watchful, with an able and confidentiai nurse or friend. And, my brethren, it is my greatest relief of mind on leaving you, to be assured the God of love and peace shall be with you.

The God of love! What a title! *God is love.* Love in its essence, source, and fulness. All other love is but derived from him; there is no love that is sweet, and delightful, and excellent, in the creature, but it is a ray from his beauty and glory. The love of parents to children, and children to parents, is very tender and endearing; the love of husbands to wives, and wives to husbands, is very entire and intimate and comforting; the love of minister and people is a bond of which I now more than ever feel the force and strength; but all these are little drops and streamlets. There is a full river of love proceeding from God. The fountain head of all love is God himself. O the wonders of his love! It has heights beyond the starry sky, it has depths beyond those of the great deep; it has lengths and breadths farther than from east to west or north to south. It passes knowledge. No tongue can fully declare it. Nor can one human being who knows that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, for a moment reasonably doubt his love.

The God of peace also! Peace flows from love. He is the author of peace, and lover of concord. And O how wonderfully has he displayed this character in the gospel of peace: "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;" never then be tempted to look upon God as one who wills your destruction, as your hard master, or your bitter enemy. This may be the view of God that the great enemy and your fallen nature would lead you to take. But the gospel shows him to you not as your enemy, but as your reconciled Father, "who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. He will quiet every troubled bosom, he will calm every agitated thought; "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." I leave you in stirring and agitating times; men's minds are afloat and the enemies of conflict are all around, "the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm;" But he also "stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people." To his people he is, in all, "the God of peace," and the very signs of discord may be to you the emblems and tokens of the speedy approach of the Prince of peace. And if you want a refuge, O what a refuge is here, the God of peace! "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast. For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth also shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain. But the God of peace shall be with you."

But let us more particularly notice *what it is to have the God of love and peace with us.*

With you in all situations and circumstances; with you in the congregation, whenever you assemble together, O may you be filled with Divine love and peace; the doctrine of love and peace continually proclaimed from the pulpit and felt in every bosom; the riches of love and peace exhibited in brighest colours in your public baptisms, and around the table of the Lord when commemorating his dying love. In all your religious meetings may the God of love and peace preside and abundantly manifest the sweet savour of his graces. In your families may the same glorious Being condescend to dwell; even as if I said in each of your houses, "Peace be to this house," so from the heart would I say, the God of love and peace be in all your dwellings. Receive into your hearts also the same great inhabitant, and "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

O my brethren, well may you spare the feeble light of a taper if you have the bright shining of the full sun of glo-

ry; well may you part with a messenger, if you have his Master himself as your guest and friend. His omnipotence meets all your weakness; His omnipresence visits you in all your varied abodes; His exhaustless fulness of wisdom, love, and riches will supply all your necessities. Wherever he is, there is light and gladness, peace and love. Wherever he is, there is a supply of all your varied needs. Your ministers are but earthen vessels, and can convey but a limited supply; all human aid is but as that derived from a cistern: you have a fuller, an inexhaustible source, and "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." I commend you all to the God of love and peace.

Before I conclude, let me once more address the different classes before me; may these parting words be used of God, to the calling in of any of his sheep, or to the edifying of any his people.

And first I address *the unconverted*. Doubtless there are such here. In so crowded a congregation there must be those not truly converted to God. They may have heard and approved the truth, but they have never been turned from their sins. They have never experienced an entire inward change, and are not new creatures in Christ Jesus. They love the world and the things of the world; their treasure is in it, and their heart is in it. Once more then let this voice reach your ears, and may the Holy Spirit send it home to your hearts—Turn ye, turn ye. Hear once more the gracious declaration of your God. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel." I tremble at the thought of your condemnation. O how fearful is the very supposition, that when we meet again it may be before the judgment seat, and then that, instead of your being my joy, I am compelled to witness against you, and when I have to speak concerning you to say, "Time after time I preached thy word to them, I warned them, I entreated them, I laid thy promises, O my God, before them, I made known thy threatenings to them, but they would not hear!" Some of you are, I fear, walking still in the ways of ruin; your conduct is not that which stamps the Christian. O, I also would speak, even with many tears, of those "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." Once more I set before you Christ and his salvation; once more I invite you to come to him; once more I tell you the Heavenly Father is ready to receive you, and Jesus to save you, and the Spirit to sanctify. God of all grace, grant, ere it be too late, they may come to thee. God of all grace, make these last words converting words to unconverted souls now before Thee.

Lastly, I address the *converted*, those to whom sin is grievous and Christ is precious; those who love his word, his day, his house, his ordinances, and his people. May grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you. "Ye are my joy and crown of rejoicing." I have good hope through grace that you will persevere. "We live if ye stand fast in the Lord;" the words express my inward feelings concerning you. May the Lord himself hold up your goings in his paths. Our past communion has been pleasant and profitable. Often our hearts have been touched, and melted, and comforted under the sense of God's presence and love; the glow of devotion has warmed our bosoms together; the praises of the Redeemer like one volume of holy joy and admiration, has together ascended up to the Heavenly Habitation; but all that we have hitherto enjoyed, is but the foretaste of a more entire and more blessed communion. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits

of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." Soon shall we join that blessed company. Short indeed is the intervening time. But in that intervening time, may the bond of prayer still unite us, often may we meet at the throne of grace, and at length for ever sing together the praises of him "who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father."—"To him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen."

A TREATISE ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART I.

DESIGNED TO EXPLAIN THE DOCTRINES AND DUTIES CONNECTED WITH THE HOLY COMMUNION.

CHAPTER I.

The Appointment of the Lord's Supper.

The circumstances in which the Lord's Supper was first appointed are full of interest. Let us for a moment place ourselves at Jerusalem at its first institution, amid the little company gathered round our Lord in the upper chamber. It was a solemn and impressive season. He had just foretold the speedy destruction of their beautiful city, and magnificent temple. He had clearly intimated to them that a scene of sorrow was at hand: but when he saw the anxiety which it occasioned, he laboured to support and encourage them. The disciples were deeply affected by the peculiar tenderness both of his discourses and of his conduct. He told them, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." He then washed their feet; and afterwards, "troubled in spirit, he testified, One of you shall betray me." Exceedingly sorrowful, each of them asked, "Lord, is it I?"

A cloud of affliction evidently hung over their heads, and they knew not what was before them. With one exception, they deeply loved their Master, and were determined to give up their all for his sake: but they were most of all troubled at the thoughts of losing the inestimable advantages of his presence, his converse, and his affectionate care and guidance.

In the midst of this lowly and despised company, observe the blessed Saviour. Affecting, indeed, must have been that paschal supper, which contained so lively a resemblance and picture of his own immediate sufferings. But laying aside all considerations for himself, unmindful of his own sorrows, he spent his time in comforting his disciples. "His heart," says one, "was filled with love to his people; and that love, which carried him to all the darkness and difficulty that he was to go through, moved him to institute the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, for the benefit and advantage of his Church." By appointing it at this affecting moment, he made the memorial of his death the more impressive, and increased our obligations to obey the command, "this do in remembrance of me."

In order to have distinct and clear views of that important fact of which this institution is the memorial, we must go yet farther back, and briefly retrace the history of God's dealings with man from the beginning.

Originally, man was created pure and holy. Surrounded with every good, and enjoying the favour of God, he dwelt in Eden; but, by disregarding the appointed test of obedience, he fell from that happy state, and became guilty and sinful. As springing from sinful parents, all are sinful, and under the sentence of death. "In Adam all die;" "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

The extent of this corruption will be

seen in the divine declaration, that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;" and in the confession of his most devoted servants, "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me:" "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

But "God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us," did not leave man without a hope. He promised a Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of this deliverer was delayed for 4000 years. By this means all the natural tendencies of the human heart were displayed, and man's inability to work out his own restoration to holiness and happiness was fully proved. Hence the necessity of the redemption by Jesus Christ, was made manifest; men were prepared to expect some grand fulfillment of the splendid language of prophecy, and the faith of God's servants in his promises, was exercised and proved. But though the coming of our Lord was so long delayed, such clear intimation of his person, character, and work, were given, that no sincere inquirer could mistake the Messiah when at length he appeared.

In order to fulfill his gracious design, it pleased God to set the people of Israel apart from other nations, and to enter into a covenant with them. With this national covenant was interwoven a variety of rites and ceremonies, typical of the promised Redeemer. Among these rites, *sacrifices* (which had been before appointed,) hold a distinguished place. When animals were offered in sacrifice, they were, in pursuance of God's direction, slain before his altar, and offered up to him by the Priest, as an atonement for the sins of the worshipper. Thus "he was reminded, on the one hand, for his humiliation, of the forfeiture of his own life, of the death which he deserved on account of sin; and on the other, for his consolation, of the promised substitution of another in his stead, to bear his sin, to atone for his guilt, and to screen him from its deserved punishment." A lamb was, according to the Mosaic law, slain every morning and every evening. It is with reference to this that our Lord is called "the Lamb, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." These sacrifices of the Jewish Church were then figurative of his death for our sins.

The *Passover* must also be here particularly noticed. It was one of the three principal feasts of the Jews, appointed in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt. At this feast, a lamb, after it had been presented and slain before the altar, (Deut. xvi, 5,) was roasted with fire, and eaten with unleavened bread.* The Jews were to show

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* Several learned men have supposed that the Lord's Supper was designed to be similar to the ancient Feasts on Sacrifices. Their general statement on this subject is as follows:—

The Jews at the peace offering sacrifices, (Lev. vii, 15—20.) as well as at the passover, were accustomed to feast on the victim that had been offered as a sacrifice. 1 Sam. ix, 13. The heathen nations also retained the practice of eating a part of the victim which they sacrificed, (Exod. xxxiv, 15; Num. xxv, 2; Psalm cvi, 8,) in order to participate of the propitiation supposed to be effected by the sacrifice. The custom of a feast upon a sacrifice was very general, and the idea was, that all who partook of the feast manifested an approval of the worship, and partook of the benefit of the sacrifice. Hence the Apostles forbid Christians to eat of meats offered to idols, (Acts xvi, 29,) and St. Paul shows the Corinthians how utterly inconsistent it was that they who went to the Lord's table should yet go to the table of idolaters; "ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." Hence also St. John speaks strongly and repeatedly against those who eat of the sacrifices offered to idols. Rev. ii, 14, 20. Many think that in the institution of the Lord's Supper, our Lord therefore availed himself of this ancient and general practice, in order, by analogy to impress more forcibly on the minds of his disciples the nature of his death as a sacrifice, the necessity of an interest in it, and the duty of professing before others our faith in his blood. For a farther illustration of this view, the reader is referred to Cudworth, Watoland, Pelling, Warburton, Cleaver, Knox, A. Clarke, Card, and others who have written at large on this point.

But the writer, after considering what has been written on this subject, seriously hesitates in adopting this view, on these grounds. We do not eat of the victim itself. What we do is in remembrance of him who was the victim. The sacrifice for sin is the principal point commemorated, and the Jewish sacrifice for sin was not to be eaten. The notion does not necessarily flow either from the Apostle's statement in the Epistle to the Corinthians, or our Lord's

their children at this feast, how God had delivered them from Egypt. Exod. xii, 26; xiii, 8. The way in which the Jews observed the Passover, will illustrate some particulars in the appointment of the Lord's Supper. After they had used great diligence in putting away all the leavened bread from their houses, at the time of eating the Passover, they were accustomed to take a piece of the unleavened bread, and bless, break it, and distribute it to those assembled. They drank wine together out of several distinct vessels, with grateful acknowledgements of God's goodness to them, declaring at this time the things which he had done for Israel. The whole was concluded with a hymn of praise. It is obvious how similar several of the rites observed at the Passover, were to those adopted in the Lord's Supper.

We will only notice farther with respect to the Jewish Dispensation, *the ratification* of it. The covenant made at Mount Sinai was ratified by the sprinkling of blood. After the victim had been sacrificed unto the Lord, we read, "Moses took half of the blood, and put in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people, and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Exod. xxiv; Heb. ix, 19, 20. Such was the introduction of that large and grand system of typical atonements, which continued in force till He appeared who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Heb. ix, 26.

Let us now view the appointment of the Lord's Supper. It was at the feast of the Passover, and, as is generally supposed, immediately after partaking of it, and probably in the way that has been described, that our Lord instituted this ordinance, to be a constant memorial of his atonement for sin, and of his ratification of a better covenant by his own death.

The true Paschal Lamb, even Jesus Christ, being about to be offered up as a sacrifice for our sins, the type and shadow, now that the antitype and substance were come, were no longer to be used. The slaying of the lamb was therefore to be relinquished, and instead of the Paschal Feast of remembrance, the feast of the Lord's Supper was appointed. One was instituted the night before the deliverance from Egypt, the other the night before our deliverance from our iniquities. One commemorated redemption from Egyptian bondage, the other, a better redemption from the bondage of sin. One prefigured, by shedding of blood, the redemption of Christ; the other would exhibit, by striking emblems, a redemption already accomplished. By this new ordinance our Lord told his disciples, the Jewish Dispensation was passing away, and the Christian, clearer and fuller in its light, and richer in its blessings, was established in its place.

With this information, the works recording the appointment of this ordinance will be more easily understood. We have an account of them in four different parts of the New Testament. Matt. xxvi, 26—30; Mark xiv, 22—26; Luke xxii, 18—20; 1 Cor. xi, 23—25. As they in some measure vary, the whole are here given.

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words in the appointment. For these reasons the writer cannot but think that those who make the Lord's Supper a feast on a sacrifice, go farther than the scriptures bear them out—they have formed an ingenious analogy to the sentiments and rites of antiquity in many particulars; but they do not appear to him to have satisfactorily proved that it was our Lord's intention that this ordinance should be of a similar nature to the ancient feasts on a sacrifice. Nor is such a view by any means necessary in order to rescue this Institution from the statement, given by some, of its being a mere memorial, unattended with special benefits; as the subsequent part of this Treatise will sufficiently show.

Matt. xxvi.	Mark xiv.	Luke xxii.	1 Cor. xi.
(26.) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.	(22.) And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.	(19.) And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.	(23.) The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. (24.) And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
(27.) And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.	(23.) And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.	(20.) Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you.	(25.) After the same manner he also took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
(28.) For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.	(24.) And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.		
(29.) But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.	(25.) Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day I drink it new in the kingdom of God.	(18.) For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.	
(30.) And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.	(26.) And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.		

These different passages have been put together in a harmony as follows:

"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, as they were eating, took bread; and when he had blessed it, and given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is given and broken for you; this do, in remembrance of me."

"And, after the same manner, he also took the cup, after supper; and gave thanks, and gave it to them; saying, Drink ye all of it; and they all drank of it, and he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, and this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

"Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father, in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."

It is evident that there are several expressions here used which require to be duly understood, before we can intelligently observe this ordinance. Why are bread and wine to be used on this occasion? In what sense was the bread our Saviour's body? how was the cup his blood? What is the meaning of his body given and broken; and his blood shed for us? Why are we to eat this bread and drink of this cup? What is the nature of the New Testament? In what views are we to remember Christ, and what is the necessity and benefit of so doing? The consideration of some of these particulars will properly come in this chapter; but others of them which relate

more directly to the great doctrines of the Gospel, will require more full discussion in distinct chapters.

Do you ask, *Why bread was appointed to be used?*—We reply, it was not only at hand when our Lord appointed the institution, but it is a most significant emblem of that which it was intended to represent. It is so not merely in the mode of its preparation for our use, but as, when prepared, it is the ordinary support of man, the most common, necessary, and wholesome kind of food. What then can better represent that incarnate, suffering, and dying Saviour, who is the food of our souls?

Do you ask, *Why wine was appointed?*—We reply, this also was not only at hand, but the preparation of wine is likewise a significant emblem of our Saviour's sufferings. Wine, too, is in its properties strengthening and exhilirating; "give wine unto those that be of heavy hearts," (in the margin, "bitter of soul," Prov. xxxi, 6.) It is "wine that maketh glad" such hearts. Psalm cxiv, 15. And in this view, wine is an apt figure of that blood of Christ, which being forced from his bruised body, and shed for our sins, is suited to revive and comfort the fainting spirit of man.*

Do you ask, *Why are both bread and wine appointed?*—Various reasons may be given for this. Some have thought that the thing may be doubled to show the certainty and importance of it. Gen. xii. 32. But there are other more forcible reasons. The separation of the blood from the body marks more strongly the death of the victim as a sacrifice. The blood was considered in a peculiar way to be the life of every living creature, and that which made "an atonement for the soul," Lev. xvii, 11. Again, it is said, (ver. 14.) with marked emphasis, "It is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof; therefore I said unto the children of Israel, ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh; for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off. In the appointment, therefore, of the blood as distinct from the body, there was another strong intimation, that our Saviour gives his life for us—that "*his soul* was made an offering for sin." The Jews could not hear the command, "This is my blood, drink ye all of it," without thinking of his life being offered up for ours. The broken bread was very descriptive of our Saviour's humiliation, but does not afford that complete and striking emblem of his death, which, under these circumstances, wine poured out, the figure of his blood shed, does. Besides, as meat and drink are both necessary to nourish us, so the two figures, of the body and blood, seem given to show us that there is in Christ Jesus a complete nourishment for the soul, and that we need only look to him for every part of our salvation. To omit either bread or wine is to depart from that primitive institution, on which the whole authority of this ordinance rests.

We have now to explain *in what sense the bread was our Saviour's body, and the cup his blood.* The previous remarks will have prepared the way for a right understanding of these words. Let us remember also, the general nature of ex-

* The direction to drink *wine*, as representing the blood of Christ, seems contrary to the analogy of the Jewish Dispensation, where both people and priests were forbidden to taste the blood in any case; nor were the priests even permitted to eat the flesh of the sin offering. Some have supposed that our Lord designed to point out the nearer communion which we have with God, and the clearer discoveries of the way of pardon through the Gospel. "We have," says Bishop Patrick, "such a token and pledge of forgiveness by this sacrifice, as the ancient people of God had not, of forgiveness of their offences by the blood that was offered at their altar." Heb. xiii. 10. Perhaps however, it might serve to intimate more strongly, as it doubtless would, by its being contrary to the current of all their prejudices, that Christ actually *poured out his soul unto death*, in giving his blood; it may also show that the words of our Lord in this ordinance, will not bear, in any view, a literal interpretation. The peculiar direction that *all* should drink of it, and the assurance that *all* did drink, is observable in connection with the practice of the Roman Catholics to deny the cup to the laity. Nor does the propriety of that practice appear from the assertion sometimes made, that "all then present were ministers;" for, not to say that the disciples could at that time be only considered as believers in general, such a view of the matter would prove too much; it would go to show that the laity should be denied the bread as well as the wine.

pressions used in the appointment of divine ordinances. Of circumcision it is said, "This is my covenant," (Gen. xvii. 18.) though it was only the token of the covenant. Of eating the Paschal Lamb, it is said, "It is the Lord's Passover, (Ex. xii. 11.) though it was only the sign of his passing over the Israelites. St. Paul calls the manna "spiritual meat," and the water that flowed from the rock "spiritual drink," and says "that rock was Christ. 1 Cor. x, 3, 4. So Christ is called "our Passover." 1 Cor. v, 7. Amid these obvious figures in similar circumstances, there can be no difficulty with an unbiassed mind, as to the true interpretation of these words. The disciples do not appear to have seen any obscurity in them, nor to have asked our Lord to explain them. They had before been reproved for a literal interpretation of our Lord's direction, "take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Matt. xvi, 6—9; Mark viii, 15—21. They had seen how the Jews had erred at Capernaum, (John vi, 52.) though literally interpreting similar expressions to those under consideration, at which time our Lord told them, "the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." John vi. 63. And when our Lord instituted this ordinance, they were not in the least danger of imagining the bread and wine to be the actual body and blood of the Saviour, because he was then conversing with them. From these considerations it is evident that the declarations of our Lord on this occasion, by no means require an interpretation, so altogether remote from common sense and experience, as either the transubstantiation of the Roman Catholic, or the consubstantiation of the Lutherans.* Had our Lord meant that any constant miracle of such kind was to be performed by his ministers, and believed by his people, how different would have been his expressions. The words are not, This is now, and will be ever hereafter, when you meet together, my substantiated and real body,—or, Let it now and ever hereafter

* The terms, *transubstantiation*, and *consubstantiation*, though they may be understood by the great majority of the readers of this work, are not probably understood by all, and it is therefore hoped that a definition of them may not be considered out of place, or unimportant. By *transubstantiation*, is meant that immediately on the act of consecration, the elements of bread and wine, become actually the *body and blood of Christ*, so as no longer to be bread and wine. It is easy for any one, who will calmly reflect on the subject, to see the monstrous absurdity of this dogma of the Roman Catholic church. It is attempted to defend this doctrine, upon the principle that it is a great mystery; and I once heard Bishop England remark, that the miracle is still more extraordinary, because that while to the senses there appears nothing but bread and wine, there was in fact and essence, no bread and wine present, but the real body and blood of Christ. A mystery, as correctly understood, is something which transcends the limited powers of reason, but which has nothing in it contrary to reason. In the doctrine of transubstantiation, however, there is a palpable contradiction; for the evidence of our senses cannot mislead us as to the reality of the thing submitted to examination. If the consecrated bread appears like bread, feels like bread, smells like bread, and tastes like bread, it is utterly impossible to conceive that it should all the while be real flesh and blood, of which, to the senses, it has not one appearance or attribute.—One great error of this kind generally paves the way for another equally or still more monstrous. On the idea that the consecrated wafer is the real body and blood of Christ, is founded the denial of the cup to the laity; for the wafer being changed into the body of Christ, and the body being composed of flesh and blood, so whoever eats the wafer, does of necessity eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. Thus much for the absurd and most unaccountable doctrine of transubstantiation, with its concomitant.

Consubstantiation, a kindred doctrine, was held by many of the early Lutherans. I do not know that it is held by the modern Lutherans, and though I am not prepared to say, I am rather of opinion that it is not, but that they agree in sentiment with our own Church. There is some doubt however on this point. The doctrine does not vary very materially from transubstantiation when critically examined; and there seems to be rather a nominal distinction between the terms than a real difference. By consubstantiation is to be understood, that after the consecration of the elements, the body and blood of Christ are really present, though the bread and wine remain the same in their nature and qualities.

In contradistinction to these erroneous opinions, our church holds the doctrine that the bread and the wine are simply the emblems or symbols of the body and blood of Christ, and the 28th Article declares, that "the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith."—G. T. B.

be changed into my body,—but merely, "this is my body." As he said, "I am the true vine," "I am the door," meaning they were a figure of him; so the bread was the emblem, figure, or token, of our Saviour's body, and the wine of his blood. Just as in seeing a bust of the king, we should say, This is the king! so does our Saviour say, "This is my body!" There was a peculiar propriety in the expression he made use of, when we consider the institution as appointed in remembrance of his sacrifice, and as declaring the establishment of a new covenant, ratified as the old had been by the shedding of blood. This will be more fully pointed out in the subsequent chapter.

The expression used in giving the cup —"this is my blood," must be interpreted as a figurative expression. The cup manifestly denotes the wine in the cup, and that wine was the figure of our Saviour's blood. And one admitted figure surely ought to make those who would be disposed to insist on a literal interpretation hesitate in their statements.

But when the writer remembers how the most eminent servants of God have contended with each other on this subject, he cannot but add an earnest desire that it might please God that all who love our Saviour in sincerity, might learn to lay aside fierce disputes about that appointment, which is peculiarly calculated, when rightly viewed, to fill our hearts with love to him, and love to each other; and that all his people desiring in simplicity of heart to believe what he has declared, and to practise what he commands, might ever seek to edify each other in love.

Having in this chapter explained several of the expressions in the appointment of the Lord's Supper, we shall proceed to consider in subsequent chapters, more at large, those important doctrines directly connected with it.

CHAPTER II.

The Atonement made by the death of Christ.

In the preceding chapter we have seen, that in instituting the Lord's Supper, our Saviour stated, that his body was given and broken for his disciples, and his blood was shed for them, and "for many, for the remission of sins."

There is an evident reference in these words, to the sacrifices of the law of Moses, which were figurative of the one great sacrifice of Christ. The epistle to the Hebrews shows this sufficiently. A body broken and blood shed for the remission of sins, exhibit the meaning and intent of the Mosaic sacrifices.

Those sacrifices, and that of Christ, are thus contrasted in the Hebrews, (ix, 11.) "But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God?"

Indeed the blood of the sacrifice was in the law of Moses so indispensable to the pardon of sin, that we are assured, "without the shedding of blood is no remission." Heb. ix, 22. The reason is given in Lev. xvii, 11. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."

The word *atonement*, in our language, signifies *agreement;* or the means by which agreement or reconciliation is made. The general meaning of the original Hebrew word is, *to hide*, or *cover*. When it refers to sin, it means sin forgiven, remitted, or expiated, through the legal rite appointed for that purpose.*

The Levitical atonement, in all cases produced the effect of fitting for the divine service. Where moral character was concerned, (which in one view was the case, even when atonement was made for the holy place, &c. for they were unclean through the transgressions of the people, (Lev. xvi, 16—19.) the atonement was an act of propitiation, being the appointed way for making the Divine Being propitious and favourable to his people. So that atonement and reconciliation, or forgiveness, were thus intimately connected.

By the atonement made by the death of Christ, we mean, then, that the sufferings and death of our Lord were accepted as a sacrifice for sin, in regard to which God forgives our iniquities.

Were there no other proofs of this doctrine than those expressions used in the appointment of the Lord's Supper, they would establish it. But it has pleased God to express so important a truth in a great variety of ways.

Before we quote additional proofs of this great doctrine, let us briefly notice the dignity of the victim who gave himself up as a sacrifice. "God was manifest in the flesh;" He who is "over all, God blessed for ever; Jehovah our righteousness; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father; the Alpha and Omega; the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come; He was made flesh and dwelt among us." By this mysterious and incomprehensible union of the divine and human natures in the person of our Lord, an infinite value was given to his sufferings and death, so that "his blood cleanseth from all sin; he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is this view alone which speaks peace to the troubled conscience. When a man is truly awakened to a sense of the multitude and the magnitude of his transgressions, the infinite majesty of Him against whom he has offended, and the true desert and the tremendous consequences of his sins, he then feels the value of an atonement made by one who is God as well as man, and rejoices in it as that which alone can be a sufficient satisfaction for his guilt.

What then do the Scriptures say of the sufferings and death of the divine Redeemer? In the Old Testament we find various testimonies to his atonement. Thus in the 53d of Isaiah, we read,—"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. He was foretold by Daniel, as "the Messiah to be cut off, but not for himself." The appointed period of his coming was fixed, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity." The New Testament language is still more express and decisive—"The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many." Matt. xx, 28. "He died for the ungodly." Rom. v, 6. God hath "made him to be sin (a sin offering) for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. "He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." Eph. v, 2. "He hath reconciled both (Jew and Gentile) unto God, in one body by the cross." Eph. ii, 16. "Who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Pet. ii, 24.

These are but a brief selection of passages which show that the all-important truth of an atonement for sin, made by the Son of God, is confirmed by a great variety of expression, and by repeated testimonies and declarations. How very different would have been the mode of expression, had Christ merely died as an example, and pattern of patience, and long-suffering! How easy and natural would it have been for all the sacred wri-

* See Magee on the Atonement, and Wardlaw on the Socinian Controversy.

ters to have used another phraseology, had they designed to convey any other instruction than that which is obvious at the first glance, to every simple and humble mind! The doctrine of the atonement will from such passages be manifest to those who read the Scriptures with an unbiassed and unprejudiced mind!

The great design of this atonement is clearly and fully expressed by St. Paul, in the 3d of Romans. After having shown the universal sinfulness and guilt of man, he goes on to declare the way of acceptance with the holy and righteous God in these words—"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

We may observe in this passage, that the Apostle notices two leading effects connected with and resulting from the atonement of Christ. It illustrates the divine perfections, and at the same time brings salvation to the guilty.

It illustrates the Divine Perfections. The doctrine of Christ's propitiation is the solution of an apparently inexplicable difficulty. The holy and righteous God who had asserted that he would "not acquit the guilty," and who had declared, he "that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord," had yet for 4000 years been pardoning and blessing sinful man, and was then dispensing pardon to believers through the world. This procedure the Apostle shows is consistent with the justice of God, and the truth of his word, by the death of Christ being an atonement for sin. The strictness, purity, and excellence of God's holy law are fully manifested, his authority is preserved, the ends of justice are obtained even in a more impressive way by the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the divine substitute, than they would have been merely by the punishment of the guilty creature.

While the mercy of God is fully displayed, his abhorrence of sin is at the same time manifested in the strongest way. Dr. Wardlaw has well expressed this. Speaking of the substitution of Immanuel as a voluntary surety, to bear the curse of the law in the room of the guilty, he says, "In this substitution we see displayed in a manner unutterably affecting and awful, the *holy purity* of the divine nature, for no testimony can be conceived more impressive of infinite abhorrence of sin than the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Here, too, we behold the *immutable justice* of the divine government, inflicting the righteous penalty of a violated law. It is to be considered as a fixed principle of the Divine Government, that sin must be punished, that if the sinner be pardoned it must be in a way that marks and publishes the evil of his offence. This is also effected by substitution, and, as far as we can judge, could not be effected in any other way. In inflicting the sentence against transgression on the voluntary and all-sufficient Surety, Jehovah, while he clears the sinner, does not clear his sins. Although clothed with the thunders of vindictive justice against transgression, he wears to the transgressor the smile of reconciliation and peace: he dispenses the blessings of mercy from the throne of his holiness; and, while exercising grace to the guilty, he appears in the characters, equally lovely and venerable, of

> ——————The sinner's friend
> And sin's eternal foe.

"In this way then all the ends of public justice are fully answered. The law retains its complete and unmitigated perfection, *is magnified and made honourable*, the dignity and authority of the Divine Government are maintained and even elevated—all the perfections of Deity are gloriously illustrated and exhibited in sublime harmony. Such a view of the Divine Being is presented on the cross as is precisely calculated to inspire and maintain (to maintain too with a power which will increase its influence the more closely and seriously the view is contemplated) the two great principles

of a holy life, the *love* and the *fear* of God, filial attachment, freedom, and confidence, combined with humble reverence and holy dread."

The importanee of the subject, and the justice and excellence of Dr. Wardlaw's remarks, will justify the length of the quotation.

We may observe also that salvation is thus become, as it respects Christ and those for whom he died, an act of divine justice as well as divine mercy. God, as he is a just God, does not condemn believers, since Christ has borne the punishment of their sins, and purchased them for himself. Blessed be our God, our pardon and acceptance in Christ Jesus, is now built on that very attribute which is so dreadful and alarming to the offending sinner! That which seemed the main bar against our acceptance, is now become the very ground why God accepts. Justice and mercy both triumph together. God remains righteous, and yet rebellious man may be for ever blessed.

Thus the cross of Christ gives the brighest display of all the divine perfections. It is a glass in which all created intelligences may see and discover, in a way that they never otherwise could, the glory of God's wisdom, power, righteousness, justice, mercy, and truth.

While God is glorified, through the same atonement, *a way of salvation is provided for sinners.* We shall have occasion, in considering afterwards the nature of the New Covenant, to enter into a fuller view of the nature of this salvation, and therefore will here only briefly notice some of the more direct blessings which are obtained by this atonement.

There is, first, *forgiveness.* "We have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The Apostle, in the passage in Romans above referred to, also shows that God *is* righteous, in the "remissions of sins that are past." As if he had said, the sins committed before the coming of Christ, were, through the infinite compassion of God, forgiven on account of the propitiation that was to be effected by his death. All the sin of man, therefore, that ever was, or will be forgiven, was forgiven through his atoning sacrifice. God's exacting the punishment of sin in the death of Christ, explained the mystery of divine patience and truth, in not punishing our first parents, Adam and Eve, with instant death, and in bearing for so many thousand years, with the wickedness of mankind; and it cleared the divine righteousness, and accounted for his forbearance with the rebellion and sin of his creatures. The same atonement is still amply sufficient to cover the whole of our transgressions against the divine law. The pardon of sin, of all sin, of the greatest and most aggravated sins, the free and entire removal of the load of guilt from the conscience, this is the glory of the Gospel of Christ.

The benefit of the atonement of Christ is also exhibited in another light as the cause of the free *justification* of the believer. His sins are not only pardoned, but he is freed from the penalty of sin. "Being justified freely by his grace," is the great blessing which the Apostle grounds on Christ's propitiation. By this redemption of Christ, a way is provided for the guilty sinner being accounted and dealt with as altogether righteous. God, whose judgment is according to truth, whose sentence is final and decisive, is "the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

Nor can we also forbear noticing *sanctification*, as another effect connected with the atonement. It is, as we have seen, peculiarly calculated to promote genuine love to God and man. "Ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are his—If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." His unspeakable love furnishes the most powerful and attractive motive to obedience; and adds new force to every other consideration which called on us to obey the will of God.

Let us farther observe, how we *partake of the blessings of the atonement:* for in vain, as to our salvation, has Christ shed his precious blood and glorified God, and procured blessings for man, if we are not "partakers of the benefit." On

this important point, the Scriptures are very express. It is "through faith in his blood" that God is propitious to us. God justifies "him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii, 25, 26. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. iv, 5. Similar passages are very numerous. The nature of faith will be considered more at large in the following chapter.

We would now press on the reader's attention the importance of the subject. It is not a matter of mere speculation and theory, but a principal, a practical, and a most cheering truth, revealed for our unspeakable benefit. The subject is of infinite magnitude. It is God's appointed plan of salvation: it is his only plan: "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Surely nothing can be conceived of more immense moment to the human race, than that which concerns the salvation of innumerable millions of immortal souls, their peace and holiness here, their deliverance from eternal woe, and their obtaining eternal life. O that every reader may so seek an interest in this salvation, as to enjoy its blessings, and to feel in his own happy experience, what an animating motive the atoning death of Christ is to a life of holiness and devotedness to that God who so loved us, that "he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." We cannot speak of this great subject merely in the language of cold statement. Christian reader! let our hearts magnify and praise the Lord. "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." Let our songs ascend up to his throne. Let us join the heavenly host in their never-ceasing hymn—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

The view which has thus been given of the death of Christ appeared needful to enable us to form right conceptions of the Lord's Supper. In this view of his death, well might a solemn ordinance be appointed, for its perpetual exhibition, and commemoration.* Dr. Doddridge justly remarks, "I apprehend this ordinance of the Eucharist to have so plain a reference to the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, and to do so solemn an honour to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, that I cannot but believe that while this sacred institution continues in the Church, (as it will undoubtedly do to the end of the world,) it will be impossible to root that doctrine out of the minds of plain humble Christians."

As you have seen, the very words appointing the ordinance bring before us the doctrine of the atonement, by telling us of Christ's body given and broken for us, and his blood shed for the remission of our sins.

We shall farther see in the next chapter, how we participate in the atonement of Christ.

CHAPTER III.

On faith in Christ's Atonement.

The Lord's Supper is manifestly an Institution designed only for Christians, for sincere believers in Jesus Christ. It is well known that the primitive churches were very particular in exercising a strict discipline, to keep the unbelieving from that holy table. Indeed, our attendance there without faith in Him, would be a mere act of hypocrisy.

Hence it becomes important for us to understand the nature of faith. The idea is in itself so simple, as rather to be

* How dreadfully the Socinians would pervert this ordinance, may be seen in the following extract from one of their writers. "If the Unitarian Society, on their English Anniversary Festival, were to consecrate the first goblet to the immortal memory of the great founder of their faith, they would more faithfully copy the spirit of this Institution, than any rival creedsman, and would accomplish the association of religion with the national and habitual pleasures of mankind." Dr. Gregory on this makes the following observation. "This attempt at transmuting the orgies of Bacchus into a Christian rite will not succeed with those who have beheld by faith "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

obscured than elucidated by definition. Faith in God's word is the same as faith in man's word, a sure belief of what is said. True faith is a practical belief of the word of God, and especially the record which it hath given of his Son. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater—he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

The Holy Scriptures illustrate the nature and effects of this faith in a variety of ways, describing it as a coming to Christ, looking unto him, receiving him, putting him on, trusting in him, living upon him, and the like. These figures very strikingly exhibit the inward workings of the believer's heart.

Repentance and faith are most intimately connected in the Holy Scriptures. Matt. xxi, 32; Mark i, 15; Acts xx. 21. There is no repentance without faith, and no lively faith without repentance. It has been observed, that repentance and faith are only two branches of the same vital root of "the new creature in Christ Jesus."

The object of this chapter is not, however, to explain the nature of faith in general, or faith in Christ, (which is a believing all that the Scriptures say of him as a divine Saviour, and so receiving him in all his offices, as our Prophet, Priest, and King,) but to bring before the reader the nature and importance of "faith in his blood." Rom. iii, 25. There is in the Lord's Supper, when duly received, a special act of faith in the atonement of Christ. This is a point of the utmost importance, as it regards our individual salvation.—Our holiness too, and our comfort, as well as our duly partaking of this ordinance, are closely connected with right views on this subject.

There are some expressions in a discourse recorded in the 6th of John,* which have often been referred to the Lord's Supper, and which will assist us to understand the nature of this faith. The circumstances of that discourse were these. The miracle of feeding the multitude with bread, and their thence following our Lord, having led him to exhort them to "labour for the meat which endureth to everlasting life," they asked him, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" His reply was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The Jews ask for a proof of his mission, and tell him of the manna which Moses had given. This leads our Lord to show them a better food—"I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He farther explains himself, when he says, "the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The Jews are stumbled at this; but our Lord only the more solemnly asserts, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

To prevent any misunderstanding of these words, by giving them a mere literal interpretation, our Lord afterwards told his disciples, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

The great subject inculcated in this discourse, is such a faith in Christ as leads the soul to rely on his giving his flesh for the life of the world. The discourse does not directly refer to the Lord's Supper; for there is not in the whole statement the slightest mention or hint of that appointment, nor could his hearers have had any clear understanding of his words, if he were supposed to be speaking of an ordinance never appointed, nor even intimated before. In such a case, would not our Lord's words have wanted that distinctness and precision which usually characterizes his discourses?

Our Lord here takes occasion, from

* It is observable, that this Evangelist, who omits the mention of the appointment of the external ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, dwells most at large on the spiritual import of these ordinances; regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and faith in the atonement of Christ.

what had previously passed, to illustrate the nature of faith in him, by food received for the support of the body. By "the flesh of the Son of man," and "his blood," he means his becoming man, and dying for us; (Heb. ii, 14,) by his flesh being given "for the life of the world," he points out the atonement which he would by his death make for mankind; and by *eating* that flesh, and *drinking* that blood, he shows how we partake of this blessing. Faith is to the mind, what partaking of food is to the animal frame. We know that before food can nourish us, it must be received, eaten, and digested; and so before any sentiments or statements can benefit us, we must believe them and dwell upon them; or, (as in the same allusion the Church Collect express it,) we must "inwardly digest them." The truths of Scripture, and the doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ, can only influence us, and produce in us corresponding affections as they are received; as they are credited and thought upon.

Thus the doctrine of the atonement may be known in a general way; we may be able to state it accurately, and prove it strongly, without our being influenced by it, or having any interest in it; in order to obtain the blessing ourselves, we must "receive the atonement." Rom. v. 11—17. Saving faith has a special reference to this doctrine. The faith by which Christians, under the Gospel dispensation, are justified and accounted righteous before God, is such a persuasion of the truth of the divine declarations respecting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as makes the soul cleave to him, and produces a sure trust and reliance upon his obedience unto death, as our only and all-sufficient ground of hope for the pardon of sin, peace with God, the gift of eternal life, and every spiritual blessing. When we are "enabled thus to believe and come to God with our load of guilt and misery, not trusting in our own righteousness, but in his manifold and great mercies, as flowing to sinners through the sacrifice and atonement of Christ, then we find peace of conscience, and a quiet mind." Our souls are satisfied and strengthened, and our hearts are set at liberty to love and serve God with gratitude and entire devotedness.

The Protestant Episcopal Church speaks very decisively on this subject. "The right and true Christian faith is, not only to believe that Holy Scripture, and all the aforesaid articles of our faith, are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ; whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments."

Only conceive the state of mind of one awakened to a true knowledge of the law of God in its reasonableness, its purity, and its extent; and a true sense of his own exceeding sinfulness. He sees that he is justly condemned, heaven is forfeited, divine wrath is incurred, and any moment may plunge him into irremediable and endless ruin; and then say whether there may not be desires wrought in the heart that can be well compared to hunger and thirst; and whether there be not in the salvation of Jesus Christ, that which may justly be called the bread of life, and the fountain of living waters; and whether faith in his doctrines may not nourish and support the soul, just as much as the most suitable food does the body! Bread or flesh is not more adapted to meet the necessities of the hungry, nor wine to strengthen and revive the weak, than the atonement of the incarnate Saviour to supply the wants of the convinced, humbled, and penitent sinner. Nothing else indeed will supply his wants. Archbishop Cranmer (whose Treatise on the Sacrament is full of instruction,) justly says, "There is no kind of meat that is comfortable to the soul, but only the death of Christ's blessed body; nor any kind of drink that can quench its thirst, but only the blood-shedding of our Saviour Christ." Let us then, when we receive the Lord's Supper, spiritually feed on Christ as our all-sufficient and all-satisfying Saviour.

It is not one act of faith only that marks the Christian. "The just live by faith." When we dwell on what Christ has done for us, and look to him for grace and strength, we receive continual supplies of spiritual food. Worldly

things weaken our spiritual strength, and deaden our devout affections. Satan tempts us, and a corrupt heart leads us astray. In the midst of these dangers, it is only in proportion as we constantly come to Christ, and "receive out of his fulness grace for grace," that we are strong and vigorous in the Christian life. Just as the body lives by receiving food from day to day, and thereby increases, and grows from infancy to manhood, so the soul lives by this faith in Christ, and goes from strength to strength till we come to "a perfect man."

The Scriptures speak very strongly of the *blessings* connected with this faith in Christ. They are stated in the 6th chapter of John in many varied expressions. Without this faith we have no spiritual life; through faith we have union with Christ, support, strength, consolation, and eternal bliss. The promise of eternal life may well be peculiarly cheering and animating to us. Observe how solemnly our Lord declares (ver. 47,) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Who can calculate the magnitude of this blessing? All the glories of this world fade before it. To be happy, and that for ever! what heart can imagine all that is comprehended in everlasting life? Look only at one point in the promise, (ver. 54,) "I will raise him up at the last day." Place only the resurrection before your eyes. The last trump is sounded—the heavens pass away with a great noise—the *Lord himself* descends. In this tremendous day, amid the wreck of worlds, who shall stand when *He* approacheth. It is the Judge of all mankind, and "who shall abide the day of his coming?" Whom will *He* raise up and place in safety? See, above, the mansion of bright and eternal glory! Behold, below, the dreary and horrible abode of never-ending woe! O Christian reader, in the day of resurrection, what a blessing beyond all description will it be to belong to Christ, and to have his promises engaged to raise *you* up to life and glory. Well, "whosover believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." You may safely build for eternity on his faithfulness. He has all power and might to fulfill his promises, all truth and willingness to perform them. O look unto Jesus, and be ye saved.

We may hitherto in this chapter appear to have departed from the direct subject of the Lord's Supper, but what has been said will tend to explain that feeding on Christ by faith, which is at once enjoined and signified by this ordinance. Though our Lord's discourse in the 6th of John has not a primary reference to his last supper, yet that Institution points out the same actings of faith, which are illustrated by the instruction in that remarkable passage. Both the literal and spiritual feeding are happily expressed together in the address of the communicant, "Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him *in thy heart* by faith with thanksgiving." Archbishop Cranmer very plainly and strikingly expresses the same ideas—"The true eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ is, with a constant and lively faith to believe that he gave his body and shed his blood on the cross for us, and that he does so join and incorporate himself to us, that he is our head and we his members; and flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, having him dwelling in us, and we in him. And herein stands the whole effect and strength of this sacrament. And this faith God works inwardly in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, and confirms the same outwardly to our ears, by the hearing of his word, and to our other senses by the eating and drinking of the sacramental bread and wine in his holy supper."

Let it be your desire, then, Christian reader, when you receeive the outward emblems of his body and blood, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and through faith, afresh to receive Christ himself as your only and complete Saviour. Augustine denies that men can carry away from this sacrament any more than they can collect in the vessel of faith. Indeed it is only as faith is in exercise, and you are really looking to Christ, by and through the outward elements, that this institution will be of profit to you. It loses its whole design as to your individual good, if you are not depending, by

faith, on the atonement of Christ, and applying afresh for an interest in his great salvation. Beside, the Lord's Supper shows us how the death of Christ is applied to our benefit. "As the bread and wine represents the body and blood of our Saviour, so the eating and drinking those elements point out that act of faith by which we apply to our own benefit the merits of his death. Whenever then you go to this holy table, lift up the eye of faith to the crucified Redeemer, dying for your sins, come with your burden to him, and so shall you "find rest unto your souls."

CHAPTER IV.

On the New Covenant.

In appointing the Holy Communion, we have seen, our Lord calls the cup "the New Testament in his blood." We propose in this chapter, to explain the meaning of this expression, and briefly to state the nature of that Dispensation, which was secured to us through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

The term which is here rendered Testament, is a translation of the Hebrew word, which is commonly rendered Covenant. We do not find that the Hebrew word is ever used in the sense of a last will, and it is doubtful whether the Greek word be used in that signification in the New Testament.

A Covenant is an agreement on certain terms, and supposes two or more parties. But when God is one party to that which is rendered covenant, it must be considered as meaning rather *a Dispensation*, declaring his mercy and goodness towards his sinful creatures, than a mere agreement. Isa. lix, 21; Heb. viii, 8—12. By a Dispensation, we mean that plan of procedure, on which God acts towards those who live under it, or, as it is more briefly defined by Dr. Johnson, "the dealing of God with his creatures." This general meaning of the term rendered Covenant, seems best to convey its sense in the passage immediately under our consideration. The term is used to denote the two chief systems of religion noticed in the Bible, the Jewish and the Christian. The nature and design of both these are fully declared in the Holy Scriptures, but as our Lord directly connects the celebration of the Lord's Supper with the New Dispensation, it will be proper, here, to give a farther account of it.

It is *called new with reference to the Jewish dispensation*, not having been fully manifested nor fully established as the only religion of men, till after the promulgation and lengthened continuance of that preparatory religion, which was given by Moses.

It is true that the plan of this rich dispensation of grace and mercy, for the salvation of sinful man, was laid before the world began. St. Paul assures Timothy that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." 2 Tim. i, 9. Those who obtain its blessings are also described by St. Paul, as "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." Ephes. i, 4. Here we see all the parties in this covenant brought to our view at once.—God, the source of all blessings—men, who were to be the objects of his grace—and Christ, the mediator of the covenant, in whom all the subjects were chosen, and by whom they would ultimately be brought to eternal glory.

It is true also that it was in part manifested to man, from time to time, before the Christian Æra—first in the promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. Gen. iii, 15. After this, as the Apostle tells us, "to Abraham and his seed were the promises made;" and thus, as he assures us, "the covenant was confirmed before," (that is, before the law of Moses) "of God in Christ." Gal. iii, 16, 17. The Mosaic Dispensation was, in various respects, a figure, shadow, or representation of the new covenant, by its tabernacle, sacrifices, &c. As we proceed in reading the sacred volume, the promises and prophe-

cies gradually unfold it with increasing clearness to our view. Though David's expression at the close of his life, may possibly have a more direct application to the covenant made with him personally, as to the throne of Israel, yet therein the promise of Christ was included, and the words are very descriptive of the blessings of this better covenant. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure—for this is all my salvation, and all my desire," (2 Sam. xxiii, 5,) as is that expression, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Ps. xxv, 14. Several of the Psalms, as xvi, xl, lxxxix, and cx, clearly show that the holy men of old entertained, in the progress of time, ideas, and used expressions, too large for the Jewish Dispensation, and applicable only to a different order of things. Isaiah, almost with the clearness of apostolical writers, brings before us that redemption on which the Dispensation of grace is founded.

But notwithstanding this previous discovery of it, which doubtless engaged the faith, and raised the hope of the servants of God, from the beginning, it is still justly styled *new*, as it was only fully revealed after the coming of Christ. It is displayed to us in that volume, which is emphatically called the New Testament or Covenant. Christ, as the Lamb of God, "verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you who by him do believe in God." 1 Pet. i, 20.

It was also only fully established by the death of Christ. Solemn promises and engagements were of old established and ratified, by blood-shedding and sacrifices. Gen. xv, 8—18. Hence the Psalmist speaks of the covenant made with God by sacrifice. Ps. l, 5. Thus the death of Christ was the sacrifice that perfected the new dispensation.

And it was yet farther illustrated and confirmed by the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Thus not only was it proved that his death was accepted as an atonement for sin, and that the divine justice was satisfied, but he was raised up from the dead, and ascended into heaven to receive those blessings which he had purchased for sinful men, to bestow those blessings to them that believe in his name, and thus to carry on the work of salvation by supplying them according to their individual necessities with "grace to help in time of need," and by filling them at proper seasons, with joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Hence, as fully manifested, as completed by the death, and confirmed by the resurrection of Christ, and as compared with the covenant made with Israel on their coming out of Egypt, it is called the *new* Covenant. The former dispensation is no longer necessary, and the Gospel is become the statute law of the whole Church of God.

Having thus seen in what respect it is a new Covenant, we will next view it *in contrast with the old Covenant.* The Scriptures frequently illustrate this subject, by contrasting or comparing one with the other.* The Jewish was a religion for a particular nation; (Deut iv, 31—34; vii, 6;) the Christian was designed for all nations; (1 John ii, 2; 1 Tim. ii, 4—6;) the Jewish was temporary; (Heb. viii, 7—13;) the Christian is permanent; (Heb. xii, 27, 28;) the Jewish had conditions to be performed, as the ground of obtaining its blessings; (Exod. xix, 5—8;) the Christian promises those very conditions as blessings which will be freely bestowed. Jer. xxxi, 31—34; Ezek. xxxvi, 27; Rom. iii, 24; Eph. ii, 8, 9. In the first covenant, the law was written on tables of stone; but the second provides for its being written on the fleshly tables of the heart. 2 Cor. iii, 3. The mediator, priesthood, and sacrifices of the two covenants, are contrasted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to show the superior advantages of the latter dispensation.

The old covenant, as considered apart from the discoveries and promises which it contains of the new, was "a ministration of death and condemnation," (2 Cor.

* See the Epistles to the Hebrews and Galatians, passim; John i, 16, 17; 2 Cor. iii, 3—18, &c.

iii, 7—9,) pronouncing a curse on all who did not obey it perfectly, (Deut. xxvii, 6,) and, in some cases, inflicting the penalty of death, without mercy, on transgressors. Heb. x, 28. The Apostle calls it "a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." Acts xv, 10. As a ministration of death and condemnation, it gives those who were never under it a very striking illustration of the sad state of all sinners. Those who sinned not against the light of the Jewish Dispensation, were yet under sin. Rom. iii, 9. They sinned against the light which they had; (Rom. ii, 12—15,) and God having not left himself without witness, (Acts xiv, 17,) they were without excuse. Rom. i, 29. But the law entered, that the offence might abound. Rom. v, 20. It discovered and detected yet more strongly the universal and deep corruption, sinfulness, and ruin of man. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" but "all have sinned." Hence all, whether under the Jewish law or not, are guilty, (Rom. iii, 19,) under a sentence of death, (Rom. vi, 23,) and condemned before God. John iii, 18.

In this state the new covenant finds all men; and it is a "ministration of righteousness," as by it condemned sinners are taught the way of obtaining righteousness through faith in him, who has atoned for our sins, and fulfilled that law which we had broken. It is also "the ministration of the Spirit," as while it is the only doctrine through which life and salvation are communicated to sinners, a much larger measure of the gift of the Holy Ghost is communicated, and to much wider extent, under the administration of the New Covenant, than ever was under the old. John xvi, 7; Acts ii.

The old covenant conveyed many intimations of the Gospel; but it was in types and shadows, or by prophecies and promises; it imparted but the beginnings of that salvation which was to be afterwards more largely bestowed. But the New Covenant both gives the substance of the emblems, and accomplishes the predictions and promises. John i, 17.

The old was, however, in the various points which have been noticed, and viewed in all its parts, a beautiful and glorious preparatory dispensation, introductory to that which was to be a blessing to the whole world, and wonderfully adapted, in its whole system, to make ready the minds of men to welcome the Gospel. "The Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ."

But "if that which was done away was glorious, how much more that which remaineth is glorious." What cause have we to thank God that we live under the light and blessings of the most clear and perfect dispensation which he has ever vouchsafed to his Church! May it have to be said of us "we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

The above contrast will enable us the more readily to understand *the nature of the New Covenant*. It will be sufficient to mention some of its leading features. Fully to explain it would be to transcribe a great part of the sacred volume.

Dr. Watts gives this description of the Divine Dispensation in general. "The public Dispensations of God towards men are those wise and holy constitutions of his will and goverment revealed, or some way manifested to them, in the several successive periods, or ages of the world, wherein are contained the duties which he expects from men, and the blessings which he promises, or encourages them to expect from him, here or hereafter; together with the sins which he forbids, and the punishments which he threatens to inflict on such sinners." We purpose here to confine ourselves to a brief view of the peculiarities of the Christian Dispensation.

It discovers to us God as a *reconciled Father*. Col. i, 20, 21. We were "enemies in our minds by wicked works." Man dislikes the service of that pure and holy God in whom he ought to delight, and daily offends him. He was therefore an object of God's just wrath, and if left to himself he must have perished for ever. Here, then, is manifested the boundless compassion and tender love of God. John iii, 16; 1 John iv, 10; Rom. v, 8. The reconciliation begins in his

own infinite grace, displayed in redemption by Jesus Christ, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto his ministers the word of reconciliation." 2 Cor. v, 19.

The new Covenant is administered by a *Mediator*. A Mediator is one who goes between parties at variance. Man, being a sinner, and so at enmity with God, the plan of grace which God devised, required the interposition of a mediator to carry it into effect. Jesus Christ, our Lord, "is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" than the law of Moses. When we were enemies "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." But besides obtaining the blessings of this covenant, he, as Mediator, dispenses them to us. Great as they are, and freely as they are now bestowed, if their communication were to depend on the will and endeavours of fallen man, we should never receive them. The whole administration of the Gospel Dispensation is in his hands.—Jesus Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission" of sins. He sends the ministers of the new covenant, (2 Cor. iii, 6,) to gather men into his Church; he makes "his people willing in the day of his power." Ps. cx. 3. He, of his own grace and love, when they were dead in sins, quickens them by his Holy Spirit, and "purifies them unto himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works."

The administration of this dispensation is carried on in the hearts of men, by the secret and gracious influence of the *Holy Ghost*, who is sent by Jesus Christ to convince and comfort, guide and govern, illuminate and instruct, preserve and sanctify his people while they sojourn here below, and thus prepare them for his eternal kingdom of glory above. Hence the gift of the Spirit is peculiarly promised, and much more largely dispensed under this covenant; "and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh."

The new covenant declares a way of *salvation*, the only way of salvation, and a salvation including deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, and the gift of eternal life. All are freely bestowed. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. ii, 8—10. Does any distressed and anxious mind inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer in the new covenant is plain and express—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts xvi, 30. This remarkably distinguishes it from the old covenant. The tenor of that was, "the man that *doeth* these things shall live by them." The tenor of the new is, "with the heart man *believeth* unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 5—9.

The new covenant has two leading *ordinances*, also distinguishing it from the old—Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the appointed ordinance for our introduction into the visible church, and the Lord's Supper manifests our continuance therein.

Again, it contains *promises* exactly suited to all our wants. See Jer. xxxi, 31—34; Heb. viii, 8—12. There are the blessings of redemption for the captive, pardon for the sinful, justification for the guilty, purification for the polluted, strength for the weak, wisdom for the ignorant, and help for the helpless. It proposes, in short, a full remedy for all our evils. The Scriptures are the records of its benefits. Let us search them diligently, that we may have as full a knowledge as we can, of all it contains for our use. The chief blessing is, indeed, eternal life. "For this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this is in his Son; he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life. Nor are these uncertain promises; they are all Yea and Amen, in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The new covenant, therefore, gives the believer great *security*. It is "well ordered in all things, and sure." 2 Samuel xxiii, 5. While it eminently tends, by

the way in which its blessings are bestowed, to manifest the divine glory, and yet to promote the happiness of man; it also most effectually provides for obedience to the holy law of God. What God, as a righteous Governor, justly demands from us as his creatures, he now, according to the beneficent tenor of the new covenant, bestows as a gracious Benefactor. Is, for instance, obedience to his laws his command as our God, and our duty as his creatures?—He promises in the dispensation of grace, to write his laws in our hearts. Heb. vii, 10. Is repentance equally required from us as sinful creatures?—he grants repentance unto life. Acts xi, 1. Is faith in his Son requisite for our salvation?—unto us "*it* is given to believe in his name." Phil. i, 29. Thus it is well ordered, as it guards against the weakness and corruption of our nature, which would otherwise prevent our obtaining its blessings. The happiness of Adam in Paradise, depending on the fidelity of the creature, failed; the national blessings granted to Israel, through their disobedience were forfeited; but in the better covenant, the fidelity of God is concerned, and he engages to work in us all that he requires of us. He promises not only not to depart from us, but that we shall not depart from him. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear into their heart, that they shall not depart from me." Jer. xxxii, 40; see also Isa. liv. 9, 10, 17. True it is, that many who have had right notions of religion, and have made a fair profession, do afterwards "make shipwreck of faith;" and this should guard us against presumption and self-confidence, and make us watchful and humble; but the Apostle assures us on this head, "they went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." 1 John ii, 19. True it is, the sincere servant of God may fall into sin, in which case his transgressions will be punished with fatherly chastisements; yet the promise even in this case is, "nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Ps. lxxxix, 30—34.

Who that knows and believes such gracious declarations, can but admire the infinite goodness and condescension of God, entering into such promises and engagements with his weak and sinful creatures! What heart but must be touched and melted with such wonderful love! O how can we hate sin enough, and love our God enough, after all that he has done for us.

Such is the blessed nature and character of the new covenant. We have farther to consider *our duty with reference to this gracious dispensation;* so that we may become interested in it, and partakers of its blessings. Every believer in Christ has a personal interest in the new covenant. We gain an interest in its blessings, when we seek them in the way of God's appointment. It is the divine invitation, "incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.—Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Isa. lv, 3—6. Our duty then plainly is earnestly to seek, and gratefully and believingly to accept the offered salvation, to observe its ordinances, and to "adorn in all things the doctrine of God our Saviour." If we are truly convinced of our lost condition, and of our sinful character; if we are truly desirous of such a salvation as that which is exhibited to us in the Gospel, God will freely grant to us the blessings of his grace, when we seek them in the name of Jesus Christ, and in a humble reliance on his atonement. The great Mediator will then plead our cause, and obtain for us, whatever is needful for present or future happiness. The Father hath committed all things into the hands of Christ, (Matt. xxviii, 18; John v, 22; Ephes. i, 22.) and when we come to him, and entrust our souls wholly to him, (2 Tim. i, 12,) he gives us the blessings of this covenant even as if it had been made solely and individually for us.

Surely "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let

them slip.—For how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" It is evidently just and right that those who refuse to receive and submit to so gracious a dispensation, should not have its blessings; that those who reject the remedy, should remain under the disease. We live now indeed under the full establishment of the new covenant, whether we accept it or not; but we are not partakers of its blessings, unless we are seeking for salvation, as guilty and helpless sinners, through Jesus Christ. Nay, if we reject and persevere in our rejection of this only way of salvation, we shall perish with aggravated guilt, and in a more tremendous ruin than those who never heard the grace of God.

Thus has God so ordered it, that none shall inherit eternal life, but in the way of repentance, faith, and holiness; and yet none shall boast or glory in his sight. The future blessedness is so proposed and promised, that none can on good grounds hope that they individually have an interest in it, but as they are partakers of these previous graces; and yet, these being his gifts, we are in all respects saved by grace. The interests of holiness, the glory of God, and the happiness of man, are all effectually secured. Faith, repentance, and obedience, have often been considered as *conditions* of our salvation. This is true, if it be only meant that they ever accompany our obtaining eternal life. But the author avoids that mode of expression, it being apt to suggest ideas to the minds of the more ignorant, as if there were some *merit* in our works; something to be done on our part, on the ground of which we might expect something to be done on God's part; or if there were *power* in man of himself to do that which is pleasing to God; both of which ideas are carefully to be guarded against, as directly opposing the plan of the Gospel. It tends also to damp the freedom of a loving heart, and to make our service one of constraint and fear rather than of voluntary and glad obedience. Are not the advantages of the term *condition* gained by representing good works, as necessary *evidences* of a state of sefcty and grace, as "things that accompany salvation?" Heb. vi, 9, 10.*

Great comfort may be derived from this Dispensation. It is a satisfactory ground of *hope* for every good. That God should, before time began, have planned and fixed such a scheme of grace, and given his Son to effect it, may well fill us with the most cheering hopes. If a man have a real knowledge of the holy character of God, he cannot but see that he is justly condemned and exposed to eternal ruin. To such a one, the way of salvation, by the only Redeemer, will be unspeakably precious. He will readily see and acknowledge that he can only be saved by a dispensation of free and sovereign grace and mercy. Here, and here only, is a sufficient foundation for all our hopes. Let us say, then, with David, "This is all my salvation." 2 Sam. xxiii, 5. The expression is peculiarly strong—*all* my salvation. Many are disposed to trust partly in their works and partly in Christ; but let them learn to depend simply, and exclusively, and entirely on the only Saviour, and to feel that without him they are wholly lost

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* Those who have supposed that the new covenant, as a covenant, necessarily implies conditions, do not seem to have duly considered the full signification and extended meaning of the original term, nor its use in places where no conditions are either named or supposable. Gen. ix, 9—17; Isa. liv, 9, 10; Jer. xxxi, 31—34; xxxii, 37—41; Ezek. xvi, 60—63; Heb. xviii, 8—12. See also Isa. lv, 3; Luke i, 72, 73.

The view above taken does not by any means lessen our obligations to obedience. Our duties are binding on us, as creatures of God, as if we had full power of ourselves to discharge them. Our helplessness and proneness to evil is the consequence of sin, and therefore a fault, and not a release from obedience. Nor let any man suppose that he may be negligent or careless; or must sit still and do nothing, till there be some extraordinary divine influence on his mind. The Apostle takes quite a different view, when he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." But if it be asked, how we come to work at all, the Apostle shows us, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that showeth mercy." And in another place, while he says, "I laboured more abundantly than they all," he yet immediately adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

and undone; and in him, and with him, for ever blessed.

It is also an abundant source of most lively *joy*. In the world Christians have tribulation. Besides the ordinary sorrows and distresses of life, and besides the afflictions of our families and connexions; the prevalence of sinful propensities, and the weakness of our faith, hope, and love, form a peculiar grief and burden to the Christian: but notwithstanding all the heavy and distressing trials and afflictions, to which we may be exposed, the dispensation of mercy in Christ Jesus may still fill us "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Observe the glowing terms by which it is introduced to us—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" If God, the Sovereign Lord of all be our friend, our joy, and our strength, if he be engaged to bless us, and we are hoping to be with him for ever, how can we sorrow "as those who have no hope?" The most important earthly events become insignificant and trifling, when we come to the borders of the grave. Then we need something solid and enduring to give us real satisfaction. We must have the word of God in our favour, and an interest in the covenant and promises of God to give us true joy. That can give joy, the highest joy, even in the prospect of death, judgment, and eternity. It has been the experience of thousands, and tens of thousands; and O that it may be the experience of the writer, and of every reader of these pages, that with Jesus as our Shepherd, we may "pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil." What can so effectually remove the sting of death as to survey this new covenant, in all its fulness and certainty, as engaging God himself to pardon, justify, and save those that trust in him? While we can never boast in ourselves, nor our own doings, and can derive no hope from ourselves, we may yet, from this glorious Dispensation, derive full and complete peace and joy. It shows us that we shall soon be in that blessed region, where neither our own sins, nor the sins of others, shall any longer harass or distress us. In the hope of this happy state of enjoyment may we forget every sorrow, and may our hearts overflow with the most exalted joy!

It now only remains that we state why our Lord calls the cup in the Lord's Supper, "the New Testament in his blood." He calls it so, not only as it is the emblem of that blood, which, as a sacrifice for our sins, obtained all the blessings of this New Dispensation; but also as that Dispensation was sanctioned by the blood of him who is Lord of all, ratified by the death of him who "was in the beginning with God, and was God." The old Dispensation was, as we have seen, (chap.i,) ratified by the blood of animals; but the greater magnitude, importance, and permanence of the Christian Dispensation, may be discerned by the immensely greater value of the sacrifice which ratifies it. Where is a greater sacrifice to be found than that commemorated in the Lord's Supper? If Moses could refer Israel to the blood of animals and say, "Behold the blood of the Covenant!" how much more may Jesus call our attention to the figure of his own blood, and say, "This is my blood of the New Covenant; this is the New Covenant in my blood." Our Lord in referring to the new Covenant on this occasion, intimates, too, the speedy abrogation of the old; so that we may adopt the words of the Apostle on referring to the expressions of Jeremiah, "In that he saith, a new Covenant, he hath made the first old: now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away." Our Lord, also, in mentioning his blood in connexion with this new Covenant, points out to our special attention that blood as the only ransom price of our redemption, the only meritorious cause of our salvation, and the perfect ratification of every blessing of the Gospel. He seems, too, to intimate, that while he thus obtained an infinitely gracious dispensation, it was an adequate motive for every suffering, and a compensation for all his woe. He saw "of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied." Whenever,

therefore, we receive the Lord's Supper, we are visibly and sensibly taught and reminded, what a gracious plan of salvation there is, how it was obtained for us, and ratified to us; and we are called by fresh acts of faith in Christ, to claim a renewed interest in it.

CHAPTER V.

The Design of the Lord's Supper.

The words of Scripture have hitherto been our guide in the statement of the doctrines connected with the Lord's Supper, and they furnish us with ample information as to its main design.* We have seen that the words of the appointment decidedly express the doctrine of our Saviour's atonement, and point out the ratification of the new covenant in his blood. The design of this institution, as it respects our practical conduct, will be more evident from the consideration of those expressions of our Lord, "this do in remembrance of me;" and those of his Apostles, "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come."

The cross of Christ is the glory of the

* This may be a suitable place to give a brief explanation of the *names* given to this institution.

Sacrament is a name given to it in common with Baptism. It is not a Scriptural name, and it has been variously explained. Some derive it from "Sacramentum Militaire," the military oath of fidelity among the Romans, and so consider it as representing our solemn dedication of ourselves to be faithful soldiers of Christ. Others, from the circumstance of the most ancient translators of the Bible into Latin, usually rendering μυστηριον, *mystery*, by the word "sacramentum," think that it was adopted in the early ages of the Church as an appropriate name for those ordinances in which there is a deep and hidden meaning veiled under a sign or figure. Augustine considers the word Sacrament as equivalent to a *holy sign*. He says, (see City of God, Book x, chap. 5,) "an external offering is a visible sacrament of an invisible sacrifice, that is, a holy sign." This is probably the true definition. The Church explains the meaning to be "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof:" thus bringing it before us as a divinely appointed means of grace, whereby we receive an increase of grace, and a token of the divine favour.

The *breaking of bread* seems to have been the first and the Scriptural name of this institution, taken from the principal outward action of this ordinance. See Acts ii, 42—46; xx, 7.

The term *communion* was doubtless derived from St. Paul's account of this ordinance, 1 Cor. x, 16. It is descriptive of the fellowship which we then have with Christ, and our Christian brethren.

The *Lord's Supper* is (as is generally supposed) a name given to this institution by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xi, 20. Being appointed by our Lord immediately after his last supper, and for his own more direct honour, it is so called with great propriety. It has the authority of Christ for its observance, and it brings before us the atonement of Christ as the chief nourishment of our souls. Some have supposed that the Apostle alluded to the ancient Love Feasts, or to them and the Communion under the term Lord's Supper, but this is not very likely.

Eucharist, that is, thanksgiving. This is one of the most ancient names given to the Lord's Supper, apparently from the circumstance of our Lord giving thanks at the time of its institution. Chrysostom, in a Homily on the 8th of Matthew, says, "The dreadful mysteries, full of salvation, which we celebrate in every assembly, are called the Eucharist, because they are a commemoration of many benefits, and show forth the principal price of divine providence, and dispose us always to give him thanks."

Oblation, *sacrifice*, and *memorial*, were names anciently given to this institution, not in the Roman Catholic sense, as has been fully proved by Protestant writers, but as being a spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise, or as representing the great sacrifice on the cross.

It is often called the *Christian Feast;* perhaps in allusion to 1 Cor. v, 8. The soul of the believer has that satisfaction, refreshment, and nourishment in the atonement of Christ, here exhibited, which the hungry person has in his food. Some have considered it as similar in its nature to the ancient feasts upon a sacrifice; and that as they were of old accustomed to partake of the victim, in order to gain the benefit of the sacrifice, so we partake of the emblems of our great sacrifice, to show our hope in him; but on this, see Note, chap. i.

It is sometimes called *the seal of the Covenant;* but this is not a Scriptural, and it does not appear to the author that it is a proper name. The idea is taken from Abraham's circumcision being "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised;" (Rom. iv, 11;) but this by no means implies that the Lord's Supper may justly be called a seal of the covenant. In fact, an unsealed covenant is of no validity. The new covenant was ratified and confirmed by the blood of Christ. As far as it relates to the confirmation of our own faith, it may be said, as Calvin remarks, to be renewed, or rather continued, whenever that sacred cup is presented to us.

Christian religion. It is the bright centre in which all the rays of spiritual light unite, and from which they proceed. It is so stupendous a fact in itself, that the Creator of all worlds, the great Jehovah, in the person of his Son, should take our nature upon him to expiate the guilt of our sins, that it may well have our constant meditation. Such tremendous sufferings, and such never-ending sorrows are averted by the completion of this grand system; and such incalculable, boundless, and eternal joys, are obtained by this sacrifice of himself, that we shall, through eternity, regard with unspeakable joy this wonderful grace of God in Christ Jesus.

The Lord's Supper is a solemn ordinance, designed for a perpetual exhibition and commemoration of the atoning sacrifice of the death of Christ. It is a representation to the outward senses, of this great truth, that the only Son of God became man, and died for our sins. It teaches us by signs and emblems, those doctrines which the preaching of the Gospel brings before us expressly in words. Herein Christ offers himself to us with all his benefits, and we receive him by faith.

Its great design is to represent, or place before us, to commemorate, and to show forth the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, and to declare our expectation of his coming again.

It is *a representation, or placing before us, of the Lord's death, as a sacrifice for sin.*—This we have already shown in former chapters—but let us dwell more particularly on the design of this representation.

Dr. Owen in his Treatise on the Lord's Supper, says in substance as follows:—

"This Sacrament is a more special and particular representation and setting forth of Christ as our Redeemer, than either the written or preached word. God has appointed him to be "evidently crucified before our eyes," that every poor soul that is stung with sin, and ready to die by sin, should look up to him and be healed. John iii, 14, 15; Isa. liii, 5. Let faith represent Christ to our souls as here exhibited of God and given unto us, as tendered to us, and received by us, and incorporated with us. Let us not rest in the outward elements and the visible sign. Christ in his love; Christ in his blood-shedding, agony, and prayer; Christ in his death, is here proposed before us, even by him who has appointed the institution. It is a way of proposal full of tenderness and love. To every communicant there is, by the grace and faithfulness of God, and through his ministers, a tender of Jesus Christ in his death and all its benefits. The main question is, whether you will stir up your hearts to a new and fresh receiving of Jesus Christ, who is thus proposed and tendered to you by the love of your Heavenly Father."

This is a very refreshing view of the Lord's Supper. The promises and proposals which Almighty God makes to you by his word are more general, and have not that sensible and particular application to the individual which is made by this affecting and tender mode of proposing the blessings of the Gospel. When the minister says to you individually, "Take, eat," and gives you individually the bread and wine, how delightful is the thought that the blessings of salvation by Jesus Christ, are graciously tendered to you! O let us stir up our hearts gladly to receive them!

The Lord's Supper is designed to *commemorate Christ crucified.** To commemorate, is to preserve the memory of any thing by some public act. We find that God frequently appointed memorials of past transactions of magnitude, to declare to future generations his glorious works. Thus circumcision was appointed as a memorial of the covenant with Abraham; the stones taken out of Jordan, were appointed as a memorial of their passing across that river on dry land; the passover, (in addition to its typical design,) was appointed as a memorial, a perpetually repeated memorial,

* The word ανα μνησις, used by our Lord, conveys the ideas of commemoration and memorial, as well as remembrance. It may be noticed as a marked distinction between the two covenants, that under the law of Moses there was a commemoration of sins. Heb. x, 3. Under the Gospel there is a commemoration of a Saviour from sin.

of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. We should, if left to ourselves, soon forget our beneficent Deliverer, and the pride of our hearts is ever tending to lead us to rely on ourselves, rather than simply rest on his promises of salvation; and hence the need of this memorial. The connexion of the precept in which we are required to do this "in remembrance of Christ," shows that we are called on chiefly to remember his death and sufferings. Let us not remember them transiently and slightly, but deeply, seriously, and constantly. Let us recollect at the same time his original dignity and glory, his wonderful humiliation and abasement, his extreme sufferings, and painful death, his resurrection, ascension, and consequent glory.

We may at all times with advantage remember Jesus Christ as a *Martyr*, witnessing a good confession before Pontius Pilate, (1 Tim. vi, 13,) and sealing it with his blood—as an *example* of suffering obedience unto death, (1 Pet. iii, 21,) as a *conqueror*, even in death triumphing over all his enemies; but it is particularly as *a sacrifice for sin*, that we should regard his death when we surround his table.

Let not your minds be turned from this one point, but remember that Jesus Christ died for your sins, and keep in view the benefits thereby procured for you. It was remarked, by a much valued friend, (the late Rev. W. Richardson, of York,) that many sincere worshippers deprive themselves of much of that comfort and strength which they might have received at the Lord's Table, by not having a single eye to the great object designed by that ordinance. Instead of keeping their minds steadily fixed upon Jesus Christ, as the Lamb that was slain, and dwelling on his sacrifice, and the efficacy of his blood, they have by turns meditated on a variety of other religious truths. They have endeavoured, for instance, to take a comprehensive view of the offices of Christ, and the various doctrines of his Gospel. This, though not so common a digression as vain and worldly thoughts, and not in itself a blameable one, may yet prevent our deriving that special benefit to be looked for in this sacrament, "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ," if it lead us from fixing our main thoughts on his death, for our sins. Those who wish to be comforted by this ordinance, should determine, while engaged in it, "to know nothing," and to think of nothing comparatively, save "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," and what is directly connected with that cheering and leading truth of the Gospel. It is here taken for granted that such know the evil of sin, wish earnestly to be healed of their spiritual maladies, and steadfastly purpose to lead a new life, for no other guests are invited to the Lord's Table. But, on this supposition, no sense of unworthiness, none of the suspicions inseparable from conscious guilt, no respect to other religious doctrines, or topics, which in their season ought to engage our attention, should draw away our main thoughts from this capital truth of the Gospel. Nor shall we, if thus steadily and singly looking to the dying Saviour, depart from his table without some degree of strength and refreshment. It has been well observed, "There are seasons in the Christian's life in which the name of Jesus comes to his heart like a live coal from the altar, and brings with it a warmth, a feeling, and a joy, which angels might come down from heaven to share."*

While the Lord's Supper commemorates, it also "shows forth the death of Christ." 1 Cor. x, 26.

There is a precept respecting the observance of the passover which will illustrate this subject. "It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that ye shall say, It is the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses." Exod. xii, 16. Similar to this is the showing, the declaring, and openly publishing the Lord's death at his table.

But what do you show forth, or declare? We declare the *fact of his death*. It has been observed, that when a fact is such that men's outward senses can

* See Bradley's Sermons.

judge of it; when it is performed publicly in the presence of witnesses; when there are public institutions kept up in memory of it; and such institutions commence, and are established at the time when the fact took place, it becomes a decisive and incontrovertible evidence of the truth of the fact. It is impossible that such an event did not take place. In this view, then, the continual commemoration of the death of Christ is, from age to age, a plain, manifest, and satisfactory evidence of his death to all mankind, and that death a sacrifice for sin. It is a standing proof of that great fact, which is the foundation of all our hopes.

We declare *the manner of his death.* That though perfectly innocent, and the only-begotten and the beloved Son of God, his bodily and mental sufferings were most painful and severe. The breaking of the bread declares his body broken—the pouring out of the wine his blood shed. And in how many ways was that body broken! Mark his anguish and passion in Gethsemane; his being smitten, spitten on, mocked, and buffeted in the hall of judgment! His enemies put a crown of thorns on his head, and they smite them into his temples. After they had scourged him, the devoted victim is compelled to bear his own cross, till he sinks under the load. At length the iron nails were driven through the tender nerves, and he was suspended on the accursed tree.* Every part of his holy body was bruised and wounded. After lingering several hours in this agony, and receiving gall and vinegar in derision, he expired, amid the bitter taunts and revilings of those he came to save, and bearing the heavy wrath of Him in whose bosom he had for ever dwelt. And even after his death "one of the soldiers," in wanton indignity and derision, "with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water."

We there declare, *the true cause of his death.* If Jesus Christ had deserved to suffer, if like other men he had himself sinned, then there would have been no cause thus to celebrate his death. But "he was wounded" for our transgressions. "In the ordinary course of justice," says Bishop Andrews, "when a party is put to death, we say, and say truly, that the executioner cannot be said to be the cause of his death, nor the sheriff by whose commandment he does it, nor yet the judge by whose sentence, nor the jury by whose verdict, nor the law itself by whose authority it proceeded. Sin and sin only is the murderer. In a certain sense it is so here. It was the sin of our polluted hands that pierced his hands; the swiftness of our feet to do evil, that nailed his feet to the tree; the wicked devices of our head that gored his head; and the wretched devices of our heart that pierced his heart; our sinfulness caused his death, and his death takes away our sin." It has been observed, the very sufferings which, so far as we are concerned, were the effect of our crimes, were, by the mysterious counsel of God, the expiation of them. —Christ was weary, that we might rest; he hungered, that we might eat the bread of life; and thirsted, that we might drink the water of life. He grieved, that we might rejoice; and became miserable, to make us happy. He was apprehended, that we might escape; accursed, that we

* Crucifixion was a most painful and ignominious mode of executing criminals. It was a Roman punishment, and only inflicted on slaves. The cross was made of two beams placed across, sometimes nearly in the form of a T, and sometimes in that of an X. Our Saviour's cross is said to have been of the former kind. This mode of death, as it was in the highest degree excruciating, so it was generally very lingering. First, the criminal was severely scourged. Next, he bore his cross, or part of it, to the place of execution. When he came thither, his clothes were entirely stripped off, and either before or after the cross was erected, his hands were sometimes bound, but ordinarily nailed to the cross beam, and his feet to the lower part. Large nails, rude and cruel instruments of torture, were thus forcibly driven through the most sensible parts of the body; and as they sustained part, if not the whole weight of the body, the pain must have been peculiarly exquisite. Thus the criminal hung, till hunger, thirst, and acute pain dismissed him from intolerable suffering. Thus, Christian reader, for our redemption, naked, despised, agonizing with pain, and exposed to the most cruel mockings, hung for several hours the innocent and holy Jesus, the Creator, and the Saviour of the world!

might be acquitted; and condemned, that we might be absolved. He died, that we might live; and was crucified by men, that we might be justified before God.

Thus the Lord's Supper was designed to represent, commemorate, and show forth the Lord's death as a sacrifice for sin. This is done for our own edification, as a testimony to the world, and as a prevailing mode of pleading his merits before God. It has been observed, that "What we more compendiously express in that general conclusion of our prayers, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," we more fully and forcibly represent in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, wherein we plead the virtue and merits of the same sacrifice here, that our Great High Priest is continually urging for us in heaven."

Whenever, then, Christian reader, you celebrate this ordinance, we exhort you, in the expressive words of a late writer, "Look up to the offering of Jesus Christ once for all: look to him as dying for the remission of your sins, washing them away in his precious blood; suffering that you might be saved. And while you are kneeling under his cross, touched with the utmost possible sense of God's love, who gave his only begotten Son, and affected with sentiments of the most tender devotion to him who gave himself for you, embrace also with your good will all mankind, who he loved for his sake. Then rise up, by his grace, to the sober, continual practice of every thing that is good, and excellent, and praiseworthy, and conformable to such sentiments and affections, and the obligations laid on you by his infinite love."

The observance of the Lord's Supper contains also a virtual *declaration of our expectation of his coming again.* We show forth the Lord's death "till he come," as the Judge of all men. 1 Cor. iv, 5; xi, 26.

By this ordinance we acknowledge that Jesus Christ will come to *judge the world.* We show that we believe that a solemn day is approaching, when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil"—that all mankind shall then be divided into two classes, and only two, the righteous and the wicked—the future inhabitants of heaven and of hell—of everlasting punishment, and everlasting life. Partaking of the Lord's Supper, is an implied and public avowal of this expectation. How important is this avowal! How well calculated to restrain evil, and encourage righteousness! How suited to fill us with a holy reverence of God, and a just fear of displeasing him!

But while this view inspires reverence, there is another consideration which should fill the servants of God with the liveliest hope and joy. He comes also as *the Saviour of his people.* Heb. ix, 28.

Had we no farther view than to remember and declare our Saviour's death, this ordinance would be full of comfort; but since we have not only to look back on what Christ has done, but forward to what he will do, new beams of light and joy are shed around this blessed Institution. It leads us to look up to Jesus as a living Redeemer, gone to prepare places for us in the mansions of his Father's house, (John xiv, 2, 3,) and to comfort each other with the animating hope that, notwithstanding all the dangers, trials, and sorrows of our present state, we shall soon be admitted into his presence, and then "we shall ever be with the Lord." In receiving the Lord's Supper, we declare our hope that Christ will hereafter appear for us as our Deliverer; that however now we may be groaning under the burden of many sins, contending with our spiritual enemies, and often worsted in the contest; yet then he will have purified our souls, and will "present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." We declare our hope, that however the Christian may now be afflicted and despised, his wisdom will one day be universally acknowledged; the justice of God perfectly cleared; and his servants be openly owned by him, and for ever blessed with him.

When this happy day arrives, then, and not till then, will the observance of this solemn ordinance cease to be a duty. "Then his people will no longer need

uch memorials as these; for they will ncessantly enjoy the brightest vision of is person, and the richest fruits of his leath."

CHAPTER VI.

The Obligation to receive the Lord's Supper.

When we consider the very small proortion of the congregation assembling or public worship, which usually remains to partake of this ordinance, it annot be deemed unnecessary to insist n the obligation which lies on the truly ious not to neglect it. Even in more eligious congregations, where the minstry is most efficient, it has been calcuated that not more than one fourth stay o partake of the Lord's Supper, while he proportion is, in general, much less.

The primitive Christians did not thus urn away from the Lord's table; the hurches communicated every Lord's ay, and it was the practice for *all*, both lergy and laity, to receive.*

What a blessing would it be to the Church, could it be again said of Christians, "they continued daily with one ccord in the temple, and breaking bread rom house to house, did eat their meat vith gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all he people."

Observe the reasons which should induce sincere Christians to attend to this nstitution.

The express command of our Saviour —"This do in remembrance of me." Luke xxii, 19; 1 Cor. xi, 24, 25. Here ve have a plain and positive precept. t is so express that it cannot easily be mistaken. It has been objected, that such a rite is inconsistent with the spirituality of the Gospel, and has no moral foundation; but the very circumstance that the command rests on the ground of positive institution, and not of natural duty, makes the observance of it a direct acknowledgment of the authority of Christ, and the neglect of it a disregard of *His* precept. Hence, as Dr. Owen says, "Faith and obedience here give special honour to Christ as our Sovereign. It is, in fact, the most direct profession of the subjection of our souls and consciences to the authority of Christ in all our religion. Our reason for it is, Christ would have it so." There is no uncertainty in the direction; it is not conveyed in dark and obscure terms,—*This do.* The command is easy. No burdensome and costly sacrifices are required, no long and tedious rites and ceremonies are to be gone through. You cannot say it was designed for the twelve Apostles, or for the Jewish nation only; for the motive applies to all with increasing strength as time rolls on, and the practice of the primitive Gentile Church contradicts such an interpretation. It is also against the express revelation made to the great Apostle of the Gentile Church, for the instruction of the Gentiles. He begins his account of this ordinance by saying, "I have received of the Lord, that which I also delivered to you." 1 Cor. xi, 23. The command being positive, love to our Saviour constrains us to obedience. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," applies to every direction of Christ; but with peculiar force to one given at the point of death, and directly concerning his own honour. The command being positive, the matter comes, where this ordinance is neglected, to this sad issue, "either Christ is not your Lord, or you are not his disciples; for a Lord without obedience! a disciple without obligation! how manifest the absurdity, how evident the inconsistency!"

2. *The motive assigned for obedience.* —It is peculiarly touching and affecting —*in remembrance of Christ.* In fulfilling a plain precept, you also give a required evidence of affectionate recollec-

* See Bingham's Christian Antiquities, folio, ol. i. p. 824—826, and Acts xx, 7. Some have hought from the statement, "they continued teadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowhip, and in the breaking of bread and prayers," Acts ii, 42,) and from the expression "coming ogether to eat," (1 Cor. xi, 20. 33,) that the rimitive Christians received the Lord's Supper whenever they assembled together for public vorship.

tion of a Saviour's death. A grateful heart longs for occasions of testifying its attachment, and gladly avails itself of any opportunity of showing love to a gracious benefactor. To whom are you so much indebted as you are to Christ? In what instance can you possibly have equally strong reasons to show gratitude and affection?

3. *The universal practice of the church* in the primitive ages strengthens this view of the duty. The whole scope of the Apostle's reasoning with the Corinthians, (1 Cor. x, 16—21; xi, 20—34;) shows that the first Christians were in the frequent habit of eating this bread and drinking this wine. The mode of expression, (Acts xx, 7.) "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them," naturally leads us to conclude that it was the practice of the church at Troas to communicate weekly. In fact, it is known* that it was in the primitive times received weekly, and in some cases oftener. Now if they, some of whom saw our Lord die, and all of whom had the ardent attachment of primitive Christianity to their Lord, felt it needful and advantageous thus frequently to celebrate the memorials of his dying love, how much more should we who live at so much greater a distance of time, and in a period when the "love of so many has waxed cold!" This being an institution appointed by Jesus Christ, the Founder of a spiritual Church, and who gave his disciples his complete design when he established that Church, it was not, like many of the ordinances of the Jewish state, merely supported by carnal reason, or suited to their national condition, or continued for a season, on account of their prejudices. It is evidently and eminently fitted to promote our spiritual improvement, and commanded in a manner which leaves us no reason to suppose that it was ever intended to be set aside, or abrogated, as the Church got more light and experience, but rather designed as a standing ordinance.

4 *The statement of St. Paul proves that the obligation is still binding on Christians.* "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi, 26. While the expression implies that the Corinthians were in the frequent practice of partaking of the Lord's Supper, it shows that it is the duty of the Church to celebrate it, till our Lord come to judge the world. It is surely an insufficient answer to this passage to say that the coming of Christ here intended is his spiritual coming, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in true believers; for he had

* See Bingham's Christian Antiquities, book xv. chap. ix. Justin Martyr, has given us, in an Apology for Christians, written only 140 years after Christ, an account of the mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper in his time. I subjoin what he says, as being calculated not only to show the practice of the church, but to prove that the peculiarities of the Roman Catholic Mass were then unknown.

Describing the rites of the first Communion after Baptism, he says, after prayers "bread and a cup of wine, and water, are brought to the President or Bishop, which he takes, and offers up praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the names of his Son and the Holy Spirit; and this thanksgiving to God for vouchsafing us worthy of these his creatures, is a prayer of more than ordinary length. When the Bishop has finished the prayers and the thanksgiving service, all the people present conclude with an audible voice, saying, Amen; now *Amen* in the Hebrew tongue is, *so be it*. The Eucharistical office being thus performed by the Bishop, and concluded with the acclamations of all the people, those we call Deacons, distribute to every one present to partake of Eucharistical bread, and wine, and water, and then they carry it to the absent."

"This food we call the Eucharist, of which none are allowed to be partakers, but such only as are true believers and have been baptised in the laver of regeneration for the remission of sins, and live according to Christ's precepts, for we do not take this as common bread, and common wine. But as Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh by the word of God, and had real flesh and blood for our salvation, so we are taught that this food, which the very same word blessed by prayer and thanksgiving, is turned into the nourishment and substance of our flesh and blood; and is in some sense the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus." After quoting the account of the institution from the Gospel, and adding a remark respecting the mysteries of Mithra, he proceeds, "after this sacrament is over, we remind each other of the obligations to his duty, and the rich relieve the poor, and upon such charitable account we visit some or other every day." His description of Christian worship on the Sunday, leads us to conclude that the Lord's Supper ever formed a part of public worship on that day. See Reeve's Apologies of the Fathers, p. 115—126.

undoubtedly come in this manner to many of the Corinthians, and yet they were in the habit of partaking of the outward ordinance, and the Apostle directed them to continue the practice.

Hence we conclude then that the respectable, and in many respects exemplary body of Christians, who from motives of conscience lay aside the outward observance of this Sacrament, are not borne out by scriptural authority, or primitive practice.—But let us not judge or condemn them; but rather remember of each one, "to his own Master he standeth or falleth." Our reasoning applies with peculiar force to those who have no such scruples, and yet usually abstain from the Lord's Table. It leaves them without excuse.

The *frequency* with which we shall discharge this duty is indeed here left, as in various other cases, to our own conscience. Thus it becomes a trial of the state of our mind towards our Redeemer, a test of our affectionate remembrance of him, and an evidence of the warmth of our love to him. Judging by this test, is not, Christian reader, the true state of the Church, even in our favoured land, lamentably low? It may be said generally, that if your heart be right with God, you will omit no opportunity that occurs in the place where you worship, to pass by without enjoying this blessing. Thomas, when once absent from the disciples, lost the cheering sight of his Saviour which they enjoyed. Yet the frequency of the communion should not perhaps be such as may tend to prevent preparation, or the impression which a solemnity has, when received at occasional intervals. It appears very desirable that it should be administered and received once a month, and on the great festivals of our Church. Nor need we fear that such a frequent reception will so abate our reverence in attending as to hinder our profit. The daily practice of prayer and reading the Scriptures has not such an effect. It is observable, that the epistle which gives particular caution against formality, gives the direction, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together." Heb. x, 35. Some pious ministers have found monthly communion to be more adapted to the present circumstances of the Church, than its more frequent administration.

Supposing the obligation to receive it be plainly proved, and fully admitted, consider farther, that to *neglect* it, is attended with aggravated guilt and danger.

It is *wilful and repeated disobedience to your Saviour.* He directs you, and his ministers invite you, to frequent his table. They say again, and again, "Come, for all things are now ready." But if you are living in the neglect of this ordinance, you greatly resemble those who first rejected the Gospel. They "with one consent began to make excuse;" and you know that it was said of them, "none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." The soul was to be cut off, and the man was to bear his sin, that neglected to eat the passover. Numb. ix, 7—11. Have you not reason to fear that a neglect of the Lord's Supper will be attended with a similar danger.

It is *separating from your Christian Brethren.* You thus break off communion with your fellow Christians. By such conduct you declare that you wish not to be numbered with the true disciples of Jesus Christ, but had rather have your lot with those who neglect him.

It is *a virtual undervaluing of your Baptism.* That was the sign of your admission into the Christian Church. The Lord's Supper is the sign of your continuance in it. By neglecting it, you appear to count your baptism a privilege not worth maintaining. This is also done when you come to years of discretion, and it is your own voluntary act, even after, through the piety of your parents, you had been baptized. Is it not manifest, that if it had been left to your own choice, you would not have been baptized? Do not go thus far to renounce Christianity. It was a great sin to withdraw from professing it, in times of difficulty and persecution, (Heb. x, 26—31,) when it might seem to admit of some extenuation from the frailty of man, and the fear of such dreadful sufferings as the primitive martyrs underwent; but "by neglecting the Lord's Supper, (the peculiar rite of Christians,)

do you not in effect deny the profession that you may have made of Christianity, and deny it, remember, in times of liberty and encouragement."

It is *a putting a slight on your Saviour's Death.* The Lord's Supper is the memorial of his Sacrifice. When you refuse to come, you do in effect declare, I will remember my worldly friends, my pleasures, my private pursuits, or other engagements; but I will not remember my Redeemer in the greatest instance of his love. I will not confess my dying Lord; I will not honour his name; I will not declare my hope in his cross. I wish to have no concern in his atonement and salvation. Christian reader, can you bear the implications which attach to this neglect? Did Jesus die for you, and will you not obey one of his last, one of his most easy, one of his most delightful precepts? The point is gained. Your heart yields. You will mourn over your past ingratitude, and determine to embrace every opportunity of remembering and publicly confessing a crucified Saviour. You see that not to do so, is in fact to renounce communion with Christ, and to say, "I can spend my time with ease and pleasure, in the scenes of idleness and trifling; but I care not to be with Christ, and love not communion with him."

But *the young* may be especially addressed on this subject. The Jews, it would appear, (Luke ii, 41, 42,) took their children at twelve years of age, to partake of the passover; and well would it be if Christian youth, at twelve or fourteen, under right impressions, and and with intelligence and piety, began to partake of the Lord's Supper. When this season is neglected, life passes silently forward, habits of omission get formed, and diffidence and false shame strengthen them. It has been observed, "we naturally feel some degree of embarrassment in doing any thing, for the first time, that is attended with a considerable degree of interest, and public solemnity." This difficulty increases with increasing years. I trust that those of my younger readers, whose hearts are renewed by divine grace, will therefore feel that now is the happy opportunity, now is the precise time, in which they should commence a practice which will soon become a blessed habit, bringing along with it a most important train of consequences, full of benefit to them all their days. It is a turning point of your life. Come to this table, and you are taking a most important step towards fixing you for a holy, useful, and happy life. Turn from it, and you are multiplying the difficulties which the world, the flesh, and the devil, ever present in the way to heaven. "The kindness of our youth," (Jer. ii, 2,) is much remembered by our heavenly Father. Give, then, to Christ, the first and the best of your days.

Yet while we would invite you, and all Christians, and require you in the name of your Saviour, not to neglect this plain command, we would press you also to "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith;" if you are still living in a course of sin, come not here; but yet keep not away altogether; repent of your sins, believe in Christ, devote yourselves to him, and then come, and you will obtain both edification and comfort.

In this chapter we have only considered the obligations in the way of duty; the privilege must be preserved for farther notice. Let us feel with Bishop Taylor, "Happy is that soul that comes to these springs of salvation, as the hart to the water-brooks, panting and thirsting, weary of sin, and hating vanity, and reaching out the heart and hands to Christ."

CHAPTER VII.

Answers to the Excuses commonly made for not coming to the Lord's Supper.

The obligation will be still farther felt, if we consider the excuses by which scrupulous or unwilling minds commonly justify their absence.

That which is most frequently urged, and which has perhaps the greatest weight, is this—that they receive unworthily, incur great guilt; *we are unwor-*

thy, and therefore dare not go. This excuse, seeming to imply a reverence to this institution, makes many easy, under a direct act of disobedience; yet, in fact, it arises from ignorance and unbelief.

It arises from *ignorance;* for many persons do not make the evident distinction between being *unworthy*, and receiving *unworthily*. The very best are unworthy. The guilty and the sinful are the very persons invited to come. A sense of our sinfulness is a needful part of preparation. If indeed a poor man resist, or cast from him, the bounty of the benevolent, he is unworthy of relief. If a sick man reject the medicine that would heal him, he is unworthy of health; but you see evidently that the poverty of the one is the very reason why he should take the offered relief; the sickness of the other is the most powerful motive to welcome and receive the physician's prescription. If then you are sensible of your unworthiness, and desire pardon and grace, you should ask them, not because you are worthy, but because you need these blessings, and must perish without them. You not only want them, but Jesus Christ invites *you* to come and receive supplies adapted to your necessities. If you are afraid of receiving *unworthily*, you will find in a subsequent chapter some information and directions which may remove this fear.

But is there not much *unbelief* and presumption in staying away? You think, perhaps, that by going you are presuming. No: it is not presumption to accept our Lord's invitation, and fulfill his command. For why was the precept given, if it were presumptuous to obey it? Take care lest you be found impugning the wisdom of the great Legislator. The presumption is, refusing to come, and not obeying the precept. Our turning away from the Lord's table does not prove our humility, but our forgetfulness of Christ's request. Is there not reason to fear that it arises not "from a tender conscience, but from a cold, careless, worldly heart!" Burkitt well observes, that "the reverence which our Saviour expects in this holy institution, is a reverence of obedience." Some that object to receive on account of unworthiness, do, as it has been remarked, "venture at some great solemnities, as Easter, to approach this table, which makes it wonderful how they can reconcile their notion of unworthiness with their practice of receiving at such seasons; or else they must have at those seasons a better opinion of themselves than is consistent with Christian humility." But beware of unbelieving thoughts of your Heavenly Father's love; entertain not hard thoughts of the compassionate Saviour of men. They are highly dishonourable to his character, his word, and his promises, and are very prejudicial to yourselves. The Lord's Supper was never designed to be a snare for human frailty. Remember, that you are not coming to Mount Sinai, burning with fire, and covered with blackness, with bounds fixed to keep off the people; but rather to "Mount Sion, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things."

Another excuse with many is, *I am too much engaged in business to prepare for so solemn a duty.* "I cannot," says Bishop Patrick, "believe that any man is so employed, that constantly, when he is to receive the sacrament, he must omit it, or be a great loser. It is incredible, that his business must be done just at that time, and that none other will serve." He then shows the futility of the excuse, by stating that if a large sum of money were to be given, every time a person came, few would resist this golden reason; they would, in that case, put aside all other business. Such a view may lead us to detect the real state of our mind. Consider, if the true meaning of this excuse be not this—"I am leading a life inconsistent with the discharge of Christian duties; I am living an unchristian life; and if I die, my soul is lost for ever." The discharge of your religious duties is your first and great business; and you had better let the body perish for want of its proper food, than the soul perish for want of spiritual food. Remember, however much you are occupied, you will one day stand in judgment before Him, who, though so engaged in

providing for your salvation, as not to have time to eat bread, yet spent whole nights in prayer, rather than neglect to fulfill all righteousness. Yet, after all, the due preparation for the Lord's Supper is often much mistaken. This subject will be afterwards noticed. Those who are really so engrossed in this world's business, as to leave no time for their most solemn duties, should seriously inquire, whether much of that business that hinders them, be not needless, or hurtful to their highest interest. But however this may be, no business of this world can justify the continued neglect of manifest religious duties. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

A third excuse sometimes offered is, *I have received the Lord's Supper, and have found no beneficial effects from it.* Perhaps you have mistaken the kind of benefit which you expected, and have looked for sensible and momentary comfort, instead of solid growth in grace. This ordinance has no miraculous power over the animal frame, but supplies the mind with powerful motives and considerations, whereby, through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to resist the attacks of our spiritual enemies. It is a means of obtaining spiritual strength from God. The Christian cannot perhaps fully know in this world, what secret strength may thus have been given to him, and how he may have been kept from the ways of sin, and in the ways of God, by the motives here suggested to his mind. But we may very safely, as to this excuse, put it to every conscience.—Can you really say, after you have deliberately prepared yourself for this ordinance, and received it with seriousness, that no resolution against sin has received fresh confirmation, no obligation to obedience has been strengthened? Or at least is it not presumptuous to question the efficacy, or deny the obligation, of attending upon an ordinance of God, merely because you have not yet derived from it all the benefits which you expected?

Again, it is objected, *I am afraid that, weak as I am, I shall break my resolution, and so incur greater guilt.* You forget that this ordinance is calculated to strengthen your resolutions. You forget that every temporal blessing you partake of increases your obligations to serve God. You forget the greater guilt of neglecting a Divine Institution. But deliberately ask yourself, "Do I mean to give up myself to the unrestrained enjoyment of sin, and the certainty of endless ruin—or do I wish to be the disciple of Christ, and the heir of his glory?" If indeed you cared not about eternal life, and could be supposed awfully to choose eternal wrath, this excuse would be less inconsistent. But if you really desire to live with Christ, and to spend a blessed eternity in the mansions above, consider, that the admission of your weakness is the reason why you should constantly go to the Lord's table for new supplies of grace; and if you fall again, as all more or less do, come the oftener to the appointed means of weakening sin, and enlivening faith, hope, love, and every Christian grace.

Some have felt scruples about receiving, because *others were at enmity with them*: but this is not founded on any just interpretation of Scripture. This view would also condemn our Saviour, the twelve Apostles, and the whole primitive Church; for none had such bitter enemies as they had at the very time this communion was most frequent.

Others feel the presence of some against whom they have a prejudice, or of whom they have reason to think ill, a sufficient excuse; forgetting the peculiarity of the Apostle's expression—*He* "that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation *to himself*," and not to his fellow communicants; forgetting our Lord knew that Judas would betray him, Peter deny him, and all forsake him, when he celebrated the last Supper with them. Yet we would not by these remarks justify indiscriminate communion. The Holy Scripture, (1 Cor. v, 11—13,) as well as our Church directs, that all open sinners be excluded.

Others receive *only* at particular Festivals, not considering, as Chrysostom remarks, that "what makes it reasonable to communicate, is not merely a festival,

or the time of a more solemn assembly, but a pure conscience and a life free from sin."

"Some Christians," it has been observed, "inquire whether they should continue to approach the table of their Saviour when their consciences are burdened with the guilt of any particular sin. To this the answer is obvious, because one end of receiving the body and blood of Christ is, to obtain the very blessings of pardon and peace of conscience, which the objection supposes to be most wanted. If, indeed, unhappily, we have committed some aggravated offence against God, and the ordinary period of our partaking of the Eucharist be near, it may be expedient to abstain for that season from the Lord's Supper; but this abstinence must be with the express intention of more humbly confessing our sins before God," that we may with sincere penitence and faith hereafter receive.

It may appear wonderful, even allowing the general darkness and corruption of the human heart, that there should be such a prevailing tendency in professing Christians to negligence, in a case where there are so many strong and tender motives for obedience. Some of the fears, possibly, may have originated from the once generally diffused papal doctrine of transubstantiation, and from a general misconception of the Apostle's reproof of the Corinthians, for their irregularities. This part of the subject will be considered hereafter.

Perhaps, however, at the root of all these excuses, there is an unsuspected, secret unwillingness of heart. Men have often a feeling of this kind. It would disturb their quiet, make them uneasy in their mind, and hinder them from enjoying the pleasures that they are wont to take in their sin. Let every one who neglects the Lord's Supper, examine this point well!

From the whole, we may conclude that there is nothing to discourage the penitent believer, from a constant and invariable attendance at this table. The duty is manifest, and the advantage great and evident.

And on the other hand, those *living in* the love and practice *of sin*, may here see the grievous state to which their conduct reduces them. You are afraid of going to the Lord's table, lest you should eat and drink damnation; but have you no reason to be afraid of the consequences of disobeying a plain command by staying away? Your sins reduce you to a sad dilemma of danger. Nothing can deliver you from it but speedy repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no safety to any living soul, but in fleeing to him "who is able to save." Let me then earnestly and affectionately entreat every such reader, to examine their own hearts, to ascertain without delay their true state before God, heartily to repent of their sins, and seek the salvation of the Gospel. Then, when you have experienced a real change of heart, when you are born again of God's Spirit, and have a good hope through grace, you will come and receive the Lord's Supper, not only without danger and reluctance, but with the greatest comfort and advantage.

We will conclude this chapter in the animating words of Bishop Patrick.

"Let no man therefore plead this, or that, in excuse for his not coming to the Lord's Table; but resolve hereafter carefully to perform so necessary a duty. Let the sinner quit his state of sin and death, and so come and eat of the bread of life. Let the ignorant come into the school of Christ, and proceed till they come to the highest form, to the upper room, where this feast is celebrated. Let those that are at enmity with their neighbours also come; let them only first go, and be reconciled to their brethren, and so let them offer their gift. Let those that have a multitude of worldly employments come; only let them leave them, as Abraham did his asses at the bottom of the mount, and so let them ascend to heaven in their thoughts, and converse with God. Let the weak come, that they may grow in strength; and let the strong come, that they may not grow weak. Let them who have fears come, that their hearts may be settled by the acts of a more lively faith; and let them come who have hopes, that they may

rise to greater degrees of a humble confidence. Let those who have leisure accept of this invitation, because they have no excuse; and let those who have but little leisure entertain it also, that they may the more sanctify their business and employments. Let the sad and sorrowful approach, that their hearts may be filled with the joys of the Lord; and let those that rejoice in the Lord always approach, that their joy may be full."

CHAPTER VIII.

On receiving unworthily.

This part of our subject, from its importance, calls for distinct consideration. The timid and the fearful are either deterred from a most valuable means of grace, by needless fears and scruples, or come with suspicions, anxiety, and distress. The careless and worldly approach without hesitation the most solemn rite of our holy religion, and make that service which only hardens their hearts, and fills them with pride and self-righteousness, a sort of passport to heaven; while a large body of professing Christians think the danger of receiving unworthily a sufficient reason for not coming at all.

The passage of Scripture on which the fears of men are principally founded, occurs in the 1st of Corinthians xi, 27—29: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.—He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

The sin of the Corinthians had been before particularly specified. "In eating, every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

You may here see what grievous and open disorders had crept into the Corinthian Church, and need not wonder at the strong expressions of the Apostle, describing the danger of their sin. They slighted the sacred rite which represented the Saviour's death; made no difference between it and a common meal; and were guilty of excesses, even at the very time of its celebration. The way in which the Lord's Supper is now administered among us, renders such a glaring abuse of it impracticable, though it be still possible, in our temper and spirit, to fall into a measure of the same guilt.

It may be first expedient to show, *what is not receiving unworthily.* He does not necessarily receive unworthily, who strongly feels his unworthiness; nor does it follow that he must have received unworthily, whose faith is weak. There may be many doubts and fears, much trepidation and anxiety, and yet the heart be in the main right with God, and those distressing feelings may only arise from not fully understanding the riches of Christ, and the liberty of his Gospel. Nor yet does it show this, if we feel the power of indwelling sin: St. Paul could say, "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This feast is not for angels, but for men encompassed with infirmities. A coldness and dulness in our duties, which we lament, does not of itself show that we receive unworthily. Some are naturally dull and heavy; but, "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." Some think a mere remembrance of an injury, though without ill will, or many worldly troubles, or the hatred of some one, or if their heart have been little moved or affected during the solemnity, or they have been then much harassed or tempted, that they have therefore received unworthily; but this by no means follows, as this chapter, and various parts of this treatise will sufficiently show. Nor yet, if afterward we fall into sin or difficulty, does it necessarily show that unworthy receiving was the cause. Anxious minds often distress themselves needlessly on these points.

The word *unworthily* means, as the context plainly shows, in an unbecoming

and unsuitable way; not with that design with which this feast was instituted by Christ nor in a manner agreeable to its importance and dignity.*

As it respects indeed the *persons* who receive, those who are living in wilful and allowed sin, those who are impenitent, and have not sought the mercy of God as poor and perishing sinners, by faith in Christ Jesus, have no suitable qualifications, and no scriptural encouragements, to go to the table of the Lord. Our Liturgy justly tells them, "Repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table."

He who makes no difference between the sacrament and a common meal, who looks not through the outward emblems, and does not by faith regard them as figures of the Saviour's body and blood, who trusts not in Christ's death, and has no love to him, and whose tempers towards his fellow creatures are unforgiving and malignant, he discerns not the Lord's body, and receives unworthily.

Nor is this a slight sin with trivial consequences—great guilt is contracted, and severe afflictions follow.

Great guilt is contracted. They are "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." In the full sense of the terms, this was the guilt of the Jews who crucified the Lord; in a secondary sense, of those nominal Christians who apostatize from the truth. But a measure even of this awful guilt, may be contracted by unworthily receiving the Lord's Supper. A person may thus manifest a contempt of the sacrifice of Christ, and be chargeable with a dreadful profanation of that sacred institution which brings it to our view.

If, Christian reader, you would shudder at the idea of imbruing your hands in the Saviour's blood, guard against any approach to so foul an iniquity. True it is, that even this is not unpardonable; for many even of the murderers of our Lord repented, and were saved. But surely no Christian can voluntarily slight the Saviour in the greatest instance of his love, with the notion that his amazing goodness may yet pardon this sin. When the question is asked, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" he will ever reply with the holy Apostle, "God forbid!"

Severe afflictions have sometimes followed this guilt. The unworthy receiver "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." The term indeed means not, as some have needlessly distressed themselves, by supposing it does, eternal ruin; but it does imply the condemnation of their heavenly Father, the Divine displeasure and anger. That the Apostle means thus much with temporal chastisements for their sin, is evident from what he afterwards says—"For this cause many are weakly and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. The Corinthians, perhaps, might attribute their sickness, and the deaths happening among them, to various natural causes; but an inspired Apostle tells them that these were sent upon them for their profanation of the Lord's Supper. Nay, we must go farther, and say, that supposing a person to continue to receive unworthily, instead of gaining any benefit, his heart will only become more hardened, and his soul in danger of eternal ruin. Indeed, however justly we may soften the words "eateth and drinketh damnation" into judgment or condemnation, there is still quite enough in them to deter the careless and presumptuous from heedlessly coming to this table.

But some may ask, How shall I avoid this danger? We add the following directions:—

Receive not *ignorantly*. The Corinthians partook of the elements without discerning the Lord's body. Those err in a similar way, who do not consider the great end designed in the Lord's Supper, and do not look through the sign to the thing signified; as do those also who do not regard the sacrifice of the death of Christ, but go on in a self-righteous spirit, as if they were performing a meritorious duty. Do you then seek to under-

* Ἀναξίως non eo consilio, quo hoc epulum a Christo est institutum, modo non conveniente dignitati et gravitati rei.—*Schleusner.*

stand the design of this ordinance, and to have right views of the atonement of Christ.

Receive not *irreverently.* We are not indeed in danger now, of those tumultuous and irregular practices which prevailed at Corinth; but is there not, in the minds of some, a want of reverence and holy awe? Do we not sometimes come in a light and careless frame of mind, if not with an impenitent heart? As there is danger on one side of an excess of fear destroying the love and freedom of the child, so there is on the other of failing in that due reverence, which is so suited to the state of sinful and dependent creatures, in all their dealings with their great Creator.

Receive not *uncharitably.* The rich Corinthians did not impart of their provisions to their poorer brethren, and thus were evidently deficient in Christian love. If we also entertain a haughty, injurious, and unforgiving spirit towards any human being, and especially towards any of our Christian brethren, we have a temper directly contrary to the spirit of this ordinance, we shall receive in an unsuitable way. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."

Receive not *with a carnal mind.* The Corinthians made their meeting together an occasion for excess and intemperance. Modern habits preclude this. Yet we may also receive with a carnal mind: many worldly passions may be at work; such as looking to see who is there; observing their dress and appearance, and forming worldly designs, when we ought to be engaged in the solemnity. The same carnal mind leads us to look only at the outward service, receiving without spirituality of mind, and without looking to, or confiding in Christ the Lord.

By giving these directions, it is not implied that any unallowed or lamented ignorance, irreverence, want of charity, or of spirituality, constitute the sin of unworthy receiving, but if these things are habitual and allowed, undoubtedly we have reason to fear that we have, in some measure, imbibed the spirit of that sin for which the Apostle reproved the Corinthians, and should, without delay, seek for pardoning mercy, and come afresh, and in a better spirit, to the Lord's Table. Even these Corinthians, though so justly and severely reproved by the Apostle for their former profane manner of communicating, yet so far from being dissuaded from coming again, must be supposed to be individually addressed in these words,—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." For, though there be danger of unworthy receiving, there is a yet greater danger in wilfully neglecting this ordinance. It is always better to discharge a duty, even though it be done defectively, than to neglect it altogether. We find Hezekiah, when there were many of the people of Israel who eat the passover otherwise than it was written, not being able, from the pressure of the time, to cleanse themselves, (2 Chron. xxx. 18,) confidently pleading in their behalf. It was the saying of a truly pious woman, "She had rather spoil ten duties, than omit one." Let no threatenings, against the mingling of sin with the discharge of your duty, lead you to neglect that duty, but rather lead you to a more conscientious and faithful discharge of the will of God.

CHAPTER IX.

On Preparation for the Lord's Supper.

It is very desirable not to enter on any spiritual service, with a careless and heedless mind; and the more solemn the duty is, the more needful and desirable is a due preparation for it. The common decencies of life, teach men that, when invited to the table of a monarch, or to associate with princes and earthly superiors, they should appear with suitable marks of respect, and so behave as may best please and honour those who have invited them. Much more when invited to the nearest communion with the King of kings, should Christians seek so to act as may please him. If David under the Legal Dispensation, attending the sacrifice of a slain beast only, felt it right to say, "I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I compass thine

altar, O Lord;" surely we, in commemorating the actual sacrifice of the Son of God, should make similar preparation. These general considerations are much strengthened, when we remember the danger of unworthy receiving, and the benefits of a due reception. We need not, however, merely infer the duty on these general grounds. There is an express direction of the Apostle—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

Preparation may be considered in two respects; that which is requisite before our first reception of the Lord's Supper, and that which it is desirable to make whenever we afterwards receive. We will consider the first in this chapter, and the other in the second part of this treatise.

The time of first communicating is a critical period in a man's life, that may much affect his future communions, as well as his whole future life. If we then duly receive, it may be a blessing to us ever after.

With respect to the *persons* who ought to communicate, we may notice, that to be a right partaker of the Lord's Supper, a man must be a *sincere Christian;* one who is sensible that he is a fallen creature; feels the guilt and corruption of his own heart; has repented of his sins; knows that there is only one way of salvation, by faith in Christ; is looking to him for that salvation, and desires above all things to win Christ, and be found in him.

Bishop Taylor justly remarks, "He that is not freed from the dominion of sin, he that is not really a subject of the kingdom of grace, he in whose mortal body sin does reign, and the Spirit of God does not reign, must at no hand present himself before the holy table of the Lord—he is God's enemy, and therefore cannot receive his holy Son." The Lord's Supper is designed "for the strengthening and refreshing of the soul," and not for the first communication of spiritual life.

But as this is a point of some difficulty, and one which is generally left to each individual to decide for himself, it may be well to enter more into particulars.

As to *open sinners*, the case is perfectly clear; every Christian concurs with the exhortation of our Church. "Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crimes, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table."

The primitive churches were very particular on this point. "Let no Judas," says Chrysostum, "no lover of money be present at this table; he that is not Christ's disciple, let him depart from it. Let no inhuman, no cruel person, no uncompassionate man, or unchaste come hither. I speak this to you that administer, as well as to those that partake."

Indeed it is both prejudicial and unprofitable to the wicked. Just as the rain which falls upon the rock, does not penetrate and soften, and fertilize it, but ever runs off from it; so the wicked, by their sinful and hard hearts, repel that gracious influence which would otherwise enter and bless their souls.

But while the case is clear as to open sinners, there is a large class of persons, in the main, of a moral character, but who manifestly have not that "spiritual mind which is life and peace," who are "walking not after the spirit but after the flesh," and we cannot recommend such persons, while in this state of mind, to go to this table. Let them "repent and believe the Gospel," and then come. The graces of repentance, faith, humility, charity, and the like, are needful to a due reception of the Lord's Supper. Men are destitute of these by nature; and till the Holy Ghost be received, there are none of these evidences of spiritual life. Now if we give ever so much meat and drink to a dead man, it can neither bring him to life, nor nourish him; and so this holy ordinance cannot profit a man dead in sins, and without a spiritual appetite and spiritual dispositions.

Yet, on the other hand, it may be observed, for the comfort of humble Christians, who are sometimes in a great strait

between a sense of their unfitness, and the obligation of a plain command, that this ordinance requires not perfection in any grace in those who come. If a man have but the very beginnings of holy dispositions, let him come to have them strengthened. The remarks of one of the Reformers on this point, may help the reader to come to a right decision. Speaking of those for whom this ordinance is intended, he says, "Let us remember, that this sacred banquet is medicine to the sick, comfort to the sinner, alms to the poor; but that it would confer no advantage on the healthy, the righteous, and the rich, if any such could be found.—The best and only worthiness that we can present to God, is to offer him our vileness and unworthiness, that he may make us worthy of his mercy; to despair in ourselves, that we may find consolation in him; to humble ourselves, that we may be exalted by him; to accuse ourselves, that we may be justified by him." Speaking afterwards of the necessity of faith and charity, he says, "There are those who have fallen into a considerable error respecting the degree of these graces, requiring a perfection of faith to which nothing can approach, and a charity equal to that which Christ has manifested towards us. But by this requisition they exclude all men from access to this sacred supper. For if their opinion were admitted, no person could receive it but unworthily; since all, without a single exception, would be convinced of their imperfections. And surely it must betray extreme ignorance to require that in the reception of the Sacrament, which would render the Sacrament unnecessary and useless; for it was not instituted for the perfect, but for the imperfect and feeble; to awaken, excite, stimulate, and exercise their graces of faith and charity, and to correct the defects of both."

Let us now proceed to consider more particularly how we may prepare for that ordinance which the Lord has instituted.

A knowledge of its nature is in the first place requisite, that when we come to this table, we may "discern the Lord's body." The previous chapter will have, we trust, given you sufficient information on this point. Read over yourselves those parts of Scripture which dwell on Christ's atonement, (as Isa liii,) and his death, (as John xix,) the nature of the New Covenant, (as Heb. viii,) the accounts of this institution given in the Holy Scriptures, (Matt. xxvi, 26—30; Mark xiv, 22—26; Luke xxii, 15—20; 1 Cor. x, 16—18; xi, 17—34,) and our Lord's statements respecting the nature, necessity, and advantages of faith in him, John vi, 28—71. Remember, it is intended to bring to your remembrance Christ's death as a sacrifice, taking away your sins; it represents that death to you; it instructs you in the nature and need of faith in him; it offers afresh his benefits to you; and, rightly received, assures you of your interest in them.

Self-examination as to the state of your own mind and heart, is another material point. By self-examination we mean a diligent search into the true state of our character, as it is in the sight of God, by comparing it with his holy word.

There are holy dispositions and tempers, there is a peculiar conduct and conversation, stated in the Holy Scriptures, as marking the character of all the children of God. And then, with more especial reference to our receiving the Lord's Supper, the intention of mind in going to this table should be examined. There may be wrong motives for going; as to obtain a religious character; from an idea of thereby meriting divine blessings; because others go; or, merely to gratify our friends. These are improper motives, and should be guarded against. We should be influenced to approach his holy table simply by a regard to the authority of Jesus Christ, and a desire to obtain, in the appointed means, his grace and blessing. There are, besides, qualifications and graces of the Holy Spirit, suitable for the due reception of the Lord's Supper. We should ascertain whether we possess these.

Our Church has, in its Catechism, given very plain and valuable instruction on the nature of the duty of self-examination; nor do I think that I can put the subject in a more instructive form, than by bringing that before you. In

answer to the question, "What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?" we are told, "To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and be in charity with all men." This answer shows us that we should examine whether we do in reality possess that repentance, faith, gratitude, and charity, which are necessary to our receiving the Lord's Supper with spiritual benefit. A few observations will now be made on those points, for the purpose of assisting you in your examination.

Inquire, then, as to your *repentance*. Do you know your exceeding sinfulness before God? You cannot repent of your sins without knowing them; nor can you know them, but as you are acquainted with the word of God. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It is from ignorance of the holy law of God, that we hear so many say—they are not great sinners—they are not worse than others—and that they have never done any thing particularly wrong. Even when they admit they are sinners in general, they will not confess that they are guilty of any one particular transgression, nor do they feel that they daily come short of the glory of God. Alas! such know not God's perfect law, and are wholly ignorant of themselves. They may know the character of thousands around them; they may know the histories of thousands of years of every country; but they know not what is to them the most important of all, the history of their own hearts, and their own lives. We are not only sinners in general, but we never did one thing wholly free from sin. We are born in a sinful world, prone to iniquity from our earliest years, and through the whole course of our lives we have been offending God. Every day, from our rising up to our lying down, in many things we offend. For what is sin? not merely what man will acknowledge to be wrong, nor what human laws punish; but sin is what God says is wrong. "Sin is the transgression of the law of God." What says that law? It requires us to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. It calls us "to be spiritually minded." It tells us, "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The bare recital of these things will show us, if we are duly conscious of our state, that there is not a day, nor an hour, in which we do not fall short of God's requirements, and sin in his sight. The reasonableness of God's law, his tender grace and mercy, redemption by Jesus Christ, the proffered aid of the Holy Spirit, and the long-suffering and forbearance of God, are all powerful and plain arguments why we should keep his commandments, and they therefore aggravate our disobedience. In inquiring, then, as to the reality of our repentance, each of us should ask himself—What are my thoughts of my sin? Do they grieve me as being committed against God? Have I another thought of sin to what I once had? Do I loathe and hate sin as the worst of all evils? Have I thus an habitual mourning for sin? a broken and contrite heart? It is the first work of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin, have I sought the gift of that Spirit?

Our repentance, if sincere, will be proved by "steadfast purposes to lead a new life." Has the conviction, then, of your sinfulness, led you to see your need of a new heart and a new spirit, without which you can never lead a new life? Under a deep conviction of the infinite importance of fleeing from the wrath to come, have you determined to do so? Have you, in retirement, seriously reflected on these things? Have you, in short, come to a deliberate and solemn resolution to give yourself up to God? Your examination as to this point should include not only an inquiry as to godly sorrow for sin, but as to the determination to walk in newness of life."

Another material subject of inquiry is, as to your *faith*. Have you a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ? Has the conviction of your sinfulness led you to seek, as a poor and lost sinner, those mercies which are treasured up in Christ Jesus? It is only those who know and trust in Christ the Saviour, that are in a state of meetness for the

Lord's Supper. And here you have need to watch against self-deception. Many think that they have faith in Christ when they have it not. If we were to ask them, Do you believe in Christ? they would be ready to take offence at the question, and to reply, "Do you take me for an infidel! I am a Christian, and of course believe in him." But, alas! this is not of course. Would to God that all that are called Christians were trusting in Christ Jesus! Real faith is not, as you will have seen in a former chapter, a mere uninfluential assent of the understanding to the truths of Christianity; but such a belief of the Gospel as leads us to a daily and hourly trusting in Christ for a supply of all our necessities.* It does not only produce a mere outward profession of Christianity, but a reliance on Christ as our Saviour, a personal reliance on him for ourselves, a coming to him individually in our own case, as our Teacher, and an obedience to him as our Governor. There is another very common error, that of trusting in a vague notion that God is merciful and all will be well. Is this a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ? far from it. Let not a mere idle fancy, or uncertain notion like this, built on no solid foundation, satisfy you.—You want a lively faith, a faith that leads you to rely on the Saviour, that influences the heart, moves the affections, and excites us to work for God; and yet renounces all hope but in Christ Jesus, as the channel through which every blessing flows, the treasury of spiritual riches, and the fountain of every good. Inquire, then, Where am I fixing my hopes? On whom do I depend for salvation? Is it not in part on my own goodness, my own prayers and endeavours? You must indeed strive, and labour, and pray, or you will never be saved; but even if you did all required, you are an unprofitable servant; and with our manifold transgressions, we are also but as condemned criminals. God's mercies in Christ are our only refuge. "So far as you think of doing any thing, call it what you may, with a hope of being pardoned and justified for its sake, so far you reject the only way of salvation, (Rom. iii, 4, 5,) and have reason to expect your portion with unbelievers." We must fix every hope in the atonement of Christ; then we shall discern the Lord's body, we shall eat his flesh, and drink his blood, and be in a prepared state of mind duly to improve this ordinance.

We should farther inquire as to our *gratitude*. Have we a thankful remembrance of the death of our gracious Redeemer? If your mind is awakened to a due sense of your sinfulness and ruin, and enlightened with a knowledge of the way of salvation by Christ Jesus, then the next point of inquiry should be—"Is the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost?" "Am I ever ready to say, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift?" Contemplate for a moment that wonderful love of God, which, before time began, planned the way of salvation. Contemplate the way in which this love was manifested. The eternal Word, the Lord of Glory, "was made flesh and dwelt among us." Consider how much it cost. God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."—Contemplate the amazing benefits, pardon, peace, salvation, and eternal life, which thereby come to us; and then you may better judge what a thankful remembrance we ought to have. Ask

* The nature of faith may be illustrated by the following circumstance. In the late winters in London, when distress has been general, a place was fitted up for the reception of the houseless poor. Bills were pasted up in different parts of the town, directing persons where to find this refuge. Many read them out of mere curiosity, and fully assented to the truth of the fact, and thought nothing more about it; but the poor and destitute read them as having a deep interest in them, as a guide to direct them where to go for food, and lodging, and all they needed. Is our faith in God's word such as this? Does it lead us to Christ? The same image will farther illustrate this subject. If any who were poor and destitute read the bills to which we have alluded, but did not believe them, or thought that if they applied *they* would not be accepted; or if they did not come, because they loved better to prowl about in the streets, practice violence, and commit licentiousness; such persons act the very same part with unbelievers in Christ, who may acknowledge the truth of what the Gospel declares, but still do not individually come to Christ for the blessings which he has promised to those who apply to him.

ourselves, then, Have these things leeply affected my heart? Have they kindled within me any warm emotions of gratitude, and called forth my devout hanksgivings? If we love Christ, we hall think much of Christ. Those hings concerning which our thoughts nost abound, mark the state of the soul. Dr. Owen remarks, "Let a man profess what he will, if his thoughts are generally conversant about worldly and sensual things, he has an earthly mind; as he thinks, so he is; there is the image nd likeness of the soul. If then we re affected with the love of Christ, it will beget in our souls many thoughts of Christ, in our lying down, and in our ising up, in our beds, in our ways, on ur occasions, as well as in ordinances. f indeed our hearts are affected with the ove of Christ, our thoughts of Christ will abound, and those thoughts will work gain on our affections, and conform us nore and more to the image of Christ." nquire thus, if gratitude for the gift and ove of a dying Saviour be a permanent nd prevailing feeling in your mind, inducing you to forsake those things which would displease God, and zealously to seek his glory. It is in this view you go o his table, saying with David, "I will come into thy house in the multitude of hy mercy!"

There is yet another very important subject of inquiry—What is your *love to man?* Are you in charity with all men. The greatest knowledge, a faith that could work miracles, and the most excellent gifts, are all vain without charity. This love to man is of such importance, that our Lord gives an express rule, equally applicable here as to the Jewish sacrifices, and doubtless principally designed for the use of the Christian Church—"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee,* leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matt. v, 23. An unforgiving temper, and a prevailing spirit of selfishness, a spirit of enmity and ill will even towards our worst enemies, are utterly unsuitable to this solemn occasion. Inquire then, whether you really love your fellow men, and what proofs you have of this love. Do you make sacrifices of your own ease, and will, and comforts, for them? Are you kind and tender hearted, ready to forgive, and abounding in works of mercy? Are you liberal towards the destitute, gentle towards the froward, forbearing towards the impatient and irritating, and kind and loving to your enemies? Are you pitying and praying for the ungodly? Are you delighting in and doing good to the pious? In short, you should inquire, Have I that charity "which suffereth long and is kind, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things?"

A close examination on these subjects is calculated to produce that humble mind and contrite spirit, and that sense of sinfulness and weakness which are most especially adapted to the advantageous reception of the Lord's Supper. Who can question himself on all these points, without seeing his own sinfulness? But be not too much discouraged by such a review; remember, the real desire after the grace of God is a sign that you have a measure of that grace already.

Meditation is both an important and a profitable part of preparation. We should think much, and deeply, if we would derive much benefit. Our chief attention should be directed to the sufferings of our Saviour. If those portions of Scripture which describe his sufferings, as the 22d Psalm, the 53d of Isaiah, and the latter chapters in the four Gospels, are carefully perused, and dwelt on in patient and deliberate meditation, our minds will receive some holy impressions, some convictions of the evil of sin, and some lively sense of the love

* Augustine notices a point here, which, as it may relieve the anxiety of a timid mind, I gladly insert: he says, "the precept is, if we call to mind that our brother has ought against us: that is, if we have any way injured him, for then it is that he has something against us. For if he have injured us, then we have something against him; in which case there is no occasion to go to him for reconcilement. You would not ask pardon of the man who has done you an injury. It is sufficient that you forgive him as you desire forgiveness."

of Christ. Dr. Owen advises, that our meditation should be regulated by our peculiar present condition. Suppose, for instance, the soul is pressed with a sense of the guilt of any sin, or of many sins, let your preparatory meditation be fixed on the grace of God and the love of Jesus Christ, as proved to the very utmost degree by his death. This is suited to give relief to your mind. Do you lament that you have not a just feeling of the evil of sin? let your meditation be principally directed to the great guilt of sin as represented in the cross, and to the severity of God against it as there manifested.*

Judge Hale found it a means of preventing wanderings, and fixing his mind, to commit his meditations to writing; and there would doubtless be much advantage in putting down those thoughts which most affect your own heart.

But after all our efforts, let us ever bear in mind, the true preparation of the heart is from God alone; earnest *prayer* is therefore here both our privilege and our duty. All the gifts and qualifications which we need, come only from God; and he gives them, and ordinarily gives them only, to those whose hearts he inclines to seek them in prayer. The more earnest, and serious, and full our prayers are, the greater blessings we are likely to receive.

Perhaps to knowledge, self-examination, meditation, and prayer, may be added, *expectation*, or a looking and hoping for the blessing connected with this ordinance. In general, in proportion as we expect the fulfillment of God's promises, so shall we receive, in God's good time and way. We should inquire, What may I hope to receive? We should expect a more lively manifestation of the Divine presence, a more sensible communion with him, an increase of the hope of his glory, and the like. Before our Lord healed the two blind, he required them to believe in his ability to do so, and "then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you."

* Some helps to meditation are added in the second part.

The discharge of this duty of prep ation requires some *stated time.* Earle remarks, "It concerns me to p pare, that I may be a welcome guest, a a worthy receiver. To prepare! thou the expression be short, it is compreh sive, and I shall find it implies more w than can be crowded into a little ti or done with a little pains. Let therefore redeem some time from business, or at least from my pleasur before the week be far advanced, t unforeseen occurrences may not depr me of an opportunity to dress my s for the glorious solemnity, and put upon the unhappy plunge of missing t feast, or wanting the wedding garmen There is much truth in these remar yet it may well be doubted, whether be expedient, to make so much of a g en time for preparation, as to hind Christians from that which was t primitive plan—frequent communi Some have time at their command, o ers have not; and the period of time be given to the duty of preparation w vary accordingly. But in general m persons might, were they in earnest, g some stated and uninterrupted time this great work. 'It has been observ "your profiting will for the most p be proportioned to the diligence w which you prepare." It may also remarked, that in all cases, much ti may be saved by watchfulness to impr opportunities. By edifying conver tion, particularly in going to and retu ing from church, we may redeem ti Remember, our Saviour notices w passes in mutual discourses. "W manner of communications are th that ye have to one another as ye walk

Be not discouraged as if you were be perfect before you go; this very stitution is designed as a help for y imperfection and weakness. "If were perfect we should not need Guard also against two opposite ev self-righteous formality in preparati and slothful self-indulgence in neglecti to prepare. As to self-righteous vie of ourselves, it was a remark of Luth —"Never are men more unfit than wh they think themselves most fit, and b prepared for their duty; never more

than when most humbled and ashamed in the sense of their own unfitness." We must not rest on the exactness of our preparation whatever it may have been, but come only in the name of Jesus. There is a tendency also in our minds, to be very careful not to sin before we receive the Lord's Supper, and afterwards to be too careless about sinning. Let us watch against this self-righteous spirit, while we foster and cherish those more serious and devout thoughts, and those greater longings after Christ and his blessings which we may experience at that time.

Seek to prepare in dependence on the grace of God, and as his appointed means for obtaining a blessing, and such a preparation will discover to you more of your sinful and lost condition; and thus the atonement of Christ, and the gift of his Holy Spirit, will be unspeakably precious to you, and you will go to his table hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Then, in partaking of the memorials of his death, you will receive the pledges of his love, and the assurance of your interest in his great salvation. You will enjoy communion with him and his people, and probably gain some foretaste of those superior pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

CHAPTER X.

On the Benefits connected with a due reception of the Lord's Supper.

The performance of each of the duties to which our Lord calls his people, is attended with many advantages; as it regards all his statutes, "in keeping of them there is great reward. It is so in this duty. While he calls us to remember him, to show forth his death, and to manifest our expectation of his coming again; in the faithful discharge of this duty, our souls obtain the most important benefits.

It is the general mistake of the mere outward professor of religion, and one to which our fallen nature, even in the best of men, has a continual tendency, to put the means of grace in the place of grace itself. Thus if the nominal Christian read the Scriptures, he congratulates himself on having performed a work of piety, without considering that they should mainly be read as the means of conforming the soul to the divine image; of quickening and directing it in the good ways of God. So if he prays to God, he rests in self-satisfaction with the mere act of prayer, without regarding it in its true light, as a principal means of obtaining help from God for our many spiritual necessities. The same dangerous mistake is made by such persons respecting the Lord's Supper. They are ready to suppose that when they have prepared for it by a course of duties, and have received it in the appointed way, that then they have done all that is required, forgetting that it is a means for a further end—advancement in piety.

The view of its benefits may be comprehended under the general term, *a mean of grace*; a method appointed of God for communicating his grace, whether it refer to the actual enjoyment, or the due improvement of that grace.

It is not indeed appointed as a means to convey grace merely by the outward receiving of it, without suitable dispositions, and as a sort of charm. Neither are we to suppose God will pardon or save any, for their mere coming to it. "God does not seem to have bound himself to this or any other ordinance in such a manner, that the immediate influences of his grace should necessarily be connected with it. We cannot say that he has thus invariably tied himself to it, nor does experience agree with such a notion; but in a regular attendance upon it, we may expect that God will meet and bless us."

It may be considered with reference to its bringing to our recollection a past transaction, and its being a means of both enjoying benefits at the present time, and furnishing a pledge of future blessings.

1. *It brings to our recollection a past transaction.* It deeply impresses on our hearts the fact of the death of Christ for sin; an event which it is of the utmost

moment that we should never forget; an event which can never be affectionately remembered by the Christian without much advantage. We have seen that the bread and wine are apt figures of the Saviour's body which was broken, and of his blood which was shed for us. What is made visible and tangible, and obvious to all our senses, has naturally a greater effect upon us, than what is merely addressed to our understanding, or only treasured up in our memory. We are indeed too apt to rest in the outward sign, so that it was desirable that the sign should only be such a resemblance as may direct our minds to the thing signified, and for this end the emblems here used are peculiarly adapted.

By this sacrament, then, the remembrance of our Saviour's death is preserved with all its freshness in our minds; and the blessings connected with that remembrance are thus bestowed upon us. It was not that he might gain our admiration and praise that our Lord appointed this ordinance; he needs not honour from man, for all the hosts of heaven worship him. But by this representation of his death, we ourselves are both edified and comforted. "Come here," says Henry, "and see the victories of the cross. Christ's wounds are thy healing, his agonies thy repose, his conquests thy conflicts, his groans thy songs, his pains thine ease, his shame thy glory, his death thy life, his sufferings thy salvation. And do not such recollections tend to produce mingled emotions of holy sorrow and joy, cordial hatred of sin, and ardent love to Christ? We might enlarge on this part of the subject, had it not been in some measure anticipated in the preceding chapter, on the design of this Institution.

2. We should, however, have only a very inadequate view of its benefits, if we merely consider those which it has a natural tendency to produce, in bringing to our recollection the death of Christ; it must be regarded as a divinely appointed *means of enjoying spiritual blessings at the present time.* "Its chief excellence is, that it is not only a figure and resemblance of our living on a crucified Saviour, but also a precious instrument whereby Christ, the bread and drink of life, is really conveyed to us, and received by us through faith. Hereby God exhibits and gives forth Christ and his salvation to true believers, and stirs up and strengthens them to receive and feed upon Christ, by present actings of faith, while they partake of the outward elements."

The Apostle, speaking on this subject, states, "the cup of blessing* which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. x, 16, 17. This passage will furnish us with a scriptural guide as to the benefits to be expected at the Lord's table. By communion (*κοινωνια,*) is meant a participation, a communication or enjoyment of the body and blood of Christ.

In order then rightly to discern the benefits which we obtain, we must consider what were the blessings obtained for us by the incarnation and death of Christ. His death obtained our *pardon*; his blood being "shed for the remission of sins." Through that blood we obtain the blessing of *justification*, and are accounted righteous before God; "being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The same sacrifice procures our *peace*, as St. Paul shows at length, Eph. ii, 13—17. Again, we receive the promise of *the Spirit* through faith in him. Gal. iii, 14; John vii, 39. The gift of *eternal life* also comes in the same way—"God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." These, with many other blessings which might be mentioned, we obtain by the death of Christ.

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* The sacramental cup seems called the cup of blessing, in allusion to the cup of wine used after the passover, to which the Jews gave this name. They called it so on account of the general blessings of God's providence, and of their redemption from Egypt. Christians have far more reason to call it the cup of blessing, as commemorating infinitely greater benefits. This cup is blessed, as it is set apart and consecrated to a holy use, even to be a memorial and symbol of the blood of Christ.

Now the real believer, through the mercy of God, in the right reception of the Lord's Supper, has the present enjoyment of those benefits which were obtained by the sacrifice of Christ, and the strengthening of those graces, in the exercise of which that enjoyment is communicated. Thus the Lord's Supper is calculated to give him an assured hope that the blessings of redemption belong to him, as well as to increase his faith, and to advance his sanctification. It also affords him many social advantages. But, remember, that every blessing obtained here, as well as elsewhere, comes from the mercy of God alone, and through the influences of the Holy Spirit freely given according to his own grace. If we depend only on the means, we may lose the blessing. If we use the means, looking up to the Lord for his promised grace therein, we shall most probably obtain the spiritual good which we desire, for the means are both adapted and appointed to produce that good.

The believer, then, may obtain *here an assured hope that the blessings of Redemption belong to him.* To have the communion of the body and blood of Christ is, in truth, to have pardon, justification, peace, the Holy Spirit, the gift of eternal life, and "all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus." Now the Apostle's question in the passage already quoted, (1 Cor. x, 16, 17,) shows that the Lord's Supper is a divinely-appointed means for believers having that communion. By the exercises of faith at the Lord's Table, therefore, we have the blessings of redemption assured to us, and thus really partake of his body and blood in that way in which only they can be received. When in a journey on a winter's day, we are favoured with a clear sky, and a shining sun, we say, "we have the sun with us:" by which we mean the light, warmth, and comfort of his beams; so when the Apostle says we have in the Lord's Supper "the communion of the body and blood of Christ," he shows that the benefits of his sacrifice are enjoyed by us. As certainly as the true believer takes the bread and wine, and feeds on them in remembrance of Christ's death, so assuredly do the spiritual blessings obtained by that sacrifice belong to him; and the very ordinance is calculated to give him this happy assurance of faith. It has been well remarked, "Here we often, like Moses from Mount Pisgah, get extended views of the promised land. Here the mourning saint finds joy, the weary rest, the dejected encouragement, and the strong increasing confidence. Here the spirit of faith applies the atonement, and the sense of reconciliation fills our souls "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Christ intends his people should be comforted, should abound in all spiritual joy, and come to a feast, "where gladness is sown for the upright in heart." In partaking of this feast our souls are strengthened and refreshed by new views of our interest in Christ, and a fresh and lively communion with him.

It is, however, by no means intended to be stated that these comforts are invariably connected with the right reception of the Lord's Supper, or that the communicant has not acceptably received it, who has not felt this "full assurance of hope;" (Heb. vi, 11;) all we intend is, that it is a blessing which the ordinance is designed and calculated to communicate, and which believers do in favoured seasons experience. But where so full a blessing is not given, there are yet benefits which are more generally and more constantly obtained. Thus faith, which is the very root of an assured hope, and the spirit of holiness, which is the only certain or safe evidence that our hope is well grounded, are here greatly nourished and strengthened.

The grace of *faith*, the root of all other graces, is specially assisted and *increased* by a due partaking of the Lord's Supper; for this institution is not only the outward sign of the Christian's feeding on Christ through faith, but a most efficacious means to help us to grow in this vital principle of the Christian's life. We must have, indeed, the beginning of faith, (if I may use the expression,) before we go. But faith is a grace of different degrees of strength. There is a *little*, a *weak*, and a *strong* faith; and the weak in faith must be received as a

Christian brother, and in time his faith may become strong.

The whole service here is peculiarly calculated to strengthen our faith in Christ, the only Saviour. Bishop Taylor remarks, "Though we are to believe before we receive these symbols of Christ's death, yet, as by loving we love more, and by the acts of patience we increase in the spirit of mortification; so, by believing, we believe more, and by publication of our confession, we are made confident." The ordinance leads us throughout, to fix our minds steadfastly and deliberately on Jesus Christ, and him crucified, the proper object of our faith; and all things tend to beget the fullest confidence in the grace of Christ, and the love of our Heavenly Father.

The Lord's Supper, also, tends to *promote our sanctification.* This is a point of vast importance, and one to which all that are in the habit of attending regularly at its celebration, will cordially give testimony. What Christian has not found the blood of Christ, as here manifested and applied, "purging the conscience from dead works to serve the living God:" the death of Christ becoming the spring of love, gratitude, and holy obedience? In a believing and vivid recollection of his atonement, the supply of the spirit of Christ is largely given, both to subdue our corruptions and strengthen our graces. Our separation from worldly vanities thus becomes more easy and more resolute, and our devotion to God more steady and more decided. It has been illustrated by the advantages of a lock on a canal, which raises the vessel and enables it to begin a new course on a higher stream, and thus it is carried over what would otherwise obstruct its course.

The due attendance on this means of grace will be accompanied by a manifest growth in humility, delighting in God, and doing good. Our spirit will become more meek, and tender, and heavenly. Just as when a sick man, through taking a medicine exactly suited to his disease, begins to recover from his disorder, his appetite returns, his recently enervated limbs are renewed with fresh strength, his late pallid cheeks catch again the glow of health, he moves about afresh with freedom, and goes to his work with alacrity and vigour, feeling more than ever the blessings of health from having been confined to his habitation and his sick room. So, when at the Lord's Table, we receive "the healthful spirit of God's grace," we "hunger and thirst after righteousness," we are raised up to new vigour in the spiritual life, we walk again with God, and go to our daily duties with fresh zeal and devotion. In short, all those holy dispositions which mark the character of Christians, are here cherished by the most effective motives. Our sense of the evil of sin is quickened, our penitence is deepened, and our love to the Saviour, and those for whom he died, is enlivened.

Thus, in these various ways, it is an appointed means of obtaining a richer enjoyment of spiritual benefits, and a higher assurance that they belong to us, and when rightly used the blessing attends the means.

The blessings of which we have spoken are indeed communicated to believers in prayer, and reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures, and the like; and also in the exercise of grace without external and ordinary means: nor is God confined to any means; but let us ever remember that he has appointed this means also; we cannot expect his blessing in any thing else, if we neglect his appointments; and it is practically found by humble Christians, to be a most efficacious way of gaining spiritual blessings.

Christians have also here many *social advantages.*—They have the benefit of communion with their fellow Christians. "For we being many are one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread."* The formation of the bread and of the wine, illustrate the intimate union of Christians. As the loaf is formed of many grains of wheat, so the people of Christ, however once distinct from each other, by the uniting bond of the Gospel, become connected together in the most

* The term εις αρτος, rendered *one bread,* may be rendered *one loaf,* describing more strikingly the union of Christians.

intimate and close union. As the wine in the cup formed of the juice of many grapes, which are all blended together, and thus the various juices become mingled and lost in one, so are the once distinct and varied minds and hearts of Christians united together in Christ Jesus; they have "fellowship one with another."

The communion of saints is a cheering and delightful subject, tending, the the more it is practically considered and experimentally felt, to draw the hearts of Christians nearer to each other. There is a relationship between man and man, effected by the Gospel of our Saviour, stronger than any merely earthly ties; there is a union, closer even than that which subsists in the members of the same body. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.—So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." The head of the body is Christ; and all his people, whether in heaven or in earth, are members of that body. At the Lord's Table we enjoy this communion. The church is here seen as a compact body. We gather courage and strength from the sight of our fellow Christians. Our mutual intercourse, profession, and devotion, animate and stir up each other. One holy sympathy of feeling pervades and runs through the whole company of devout communicants. We become interested in each other's prayers; we sympathize in each other's sorrows; we partake of each other's joys; we are travelling the same road; we have the same enemies and friends; the same difficulties and comforts; the same sorrows and joys. And when Christians thus meet in love, who will not say—"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

It is true, that this communion, as well as the benefits which have been already considered, is perceived in other means of grace; in the intercourse of private life, in Christian conversation, in mutual prayer, and the exercises of charity: but it is especially and peculiarly enjoyed in this ordinance, which is eminently calculated to unite us together as showing our common dependence on the death of the same Saviour, our common participation of his grace, our common hope of his glory.

3. We have only farther to notice among the benefits of the Lord's Supper, that the right reception of it is a *pledge*, earnest, or foretaste of *future blessings*. The appointed words of the Institution —"Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you," cannot imply less than that the true believer, when he receives the sacred elements, receives a pledge and assurance of the favour of him by whose appointment these words are addressed to him. One of the reformers says—"By commanding us to *take*, he signifies that he is ours; by commanding us to *eat* and *drink*, he signifies that he is become one with us." As the rainbow in the heavens is a token of the covenant between God and the earth, that he will no more destroy all flesh by a flood, and that man may multiply and replenish the earth: so this ordinance may be to us as a token, that God has by a better covenant, provided a deliverance for us, from a far worse destruction, and obtained for us a heavenly inheritance. The very appointment of this Institution by our gracious Redeemer, and its administration to us by his ministers, as they assure us that he is willing to be the food of our souls, and joined to us a source and support of spiritual life, strength and consolation, so they afford us the lively hope that he will never leave us nor forsake us.

Indeed, when holy affections are here excited, and communion with Christ and his people here enjoyed, these things manifest that we have received that gift of the Holy Spirit, which is "the earnest of our inheritance." As the Lord's Supper is peculiarly calculated to increase faith, hope, and love; so if you can thereby trace in yourselves stronger evidences of "the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ," your confidence will be increased, that he "which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

We have seen what the blessings of the new covenant are, and what the hope

of glory is which it sets before us. Is it a small advantage then, to have such a hope strengthened and confirmed by this pledge of God's favour? Does not "he who has this hope purify himself as he is pure?"

The due reception of the Lord's Supper is thus one of the most effective means of preparation for the second coming of Christ. Never are we more ready for the immediate presence of our Lord, than when, with a broken and contrite spirit, with a lively faith in his death, with ardent gratitude for his unspeakable mercies, and warm love to our fellow-creatures, we have been remembering Christ at his table. We come from it kind, gentle, and tender-hearted: our souls burn with the pure flame of holy love; we long to spend our whole strength in our Saviour's service; we delight in the exercise of devotion, and we have sensible communion with the Father of spirits; in short, a blessed anticipation and foretaste of the future bliss. There is that grace imparted through this most expressive ministration of the Gospel of our Saviour, which purifies and refines us, makes us meet for the heavenly inheritance, raises us above the love of this world and the fear of death, and almost inclines us to adopt Simeon's words—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It is only the Gospel that is efficacious through the grace of God to sweeten life, and console in death; to make us happy here, and blessed for ever hereafter; and no where has the Christian a more perceptible and lively exhibition of the Gospel, than in this ordinance.

It may be useful to add a few remarks of a more general nature on this subject.

The reader will have seen that all those blessings which the Scriptures promise to faith in Christ, and the possession of Christ, do in fact belong to the faithful communicant. The reason is obvious: no one can duly receive the Lord's Supper, but as he believes in Christ and rests all on him. "Therefore, all that the Scriptures say of the riches, and blessings, and treasures, which faith in Christ, as our Redeemer, can procure to us; *all that* they say of the benefit of that faith which is absolutely required by, and will be exercised in, the due reception of this Sacrament."

Many Christians do not expect enough at the Lord's Table, and thence lose much of the benefits to be there obtained. We should have a large expectation, and we shall receive large. We might justly suppose the great God to address the believing communicant—"ask what I shall give thee" (1 Kings iii, 5;) and to urge him farther—"open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ps. lxxxi, 10. Here we may have the nearest approaches to the Divine presence, that our state in this world admits. The church may say of this means of grace—"While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." Cant. i, 12. There is a blessed manifestation of the Divine presence to the soul to be here expected. View this ordinance in its true blessedness and glory, and you will justly have enlarged views of the benefits to be derived from it. Real believers may here look for abiding peace of conscience, strength of grace, joy in the Holy Ghost, and overflowing hopes of future blessedness. "It is therefore the fault of many to come rather like prisoners to the bar, than like children and friends to the table; they come trembling and full of confusion. Their apprehension of the danger of receiving unworthily runs into an extreme, so as to become an hindrance to the exercise of faith, hope, and love."

To what has been said respecting the benefits of the Lord's Supper, it is, as has already been cursorily noticed, sometimes objected, "I have been there several times, and seemed to get no benefit." This is a subject which calls for more particular consideration here, as it may remove a difficulty from the minds of humble Christians, and make those who are careless and worldly, sensible that they are wrong."

We allow that all who partake of the Lord's Supper, do not receive these blessings. It has long since been stated by our church, "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their

teeth, as St. Augustine saith, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ, but rather to their condemnation do eat and drink the sign and sacrament of so great a thing." Those also, who receive it merely as a matter of form and custom, or as a self-righteous act to do away past transgressions, without any real hatred of sin, faith in Christ, or love to him; and with perhaps a secret reserve that they may afterwards go on more freely in sin; some slighting it as a common matter, and others over estimating the outward service, as having a power which was never given it, of atoning for their sins; these communicants do not gain the benefits which have been described, just as a formal worshipper gains none of the blessings of true prayer.

Do you then find that you have gained no benefit? Ask yourself a few questions of this kind—Have I ever really repented of my sins and turned to God? If you have no spiritual life, you are not in a state to benefit by an ordinance which is designed for the Christian's growth and nourishment.—Have I duly prepared for this ordinance? Perhaps you were engaged in worldly business, when this greater business might, and should, have occupied your mind. Were you not at work, when you should have been in your closet; or reading some book on indifferent subjects, when you should have been searching the Scriptures; or enjoying yourself in your family, or with your friends, when you should have been alone? But possibly you did give a considerable time to preparation: inquire, then, farther—Have I not rested in my preparation, and expected a blessing for it, rather than for Christ? No preparation must be trusted in, or put in the place of Jesus; if so, no good will be received. Or, inquire again—Is there any secret sin indulged in my life? Israel could not prosper in the war on account of Achan's wickedness: nor will you prosper in your spiritual welfare, till your easily-besetting sin is resisted and mortified.

But those who, in humility and seriousness, make the objection which we have been considering, probably have received real, though not sensible benefit. What was the nature of the benefit which you expected? Perhaps you looked for a great deal of comfort and joy when you went, and you returned depressed, broken-hearted and humbled. But is not that very spirit in which you returned, a real benefit? Isa. lvii, 15. "If you do not come away with a rejoicing heart, yet, if you come away with a weeping eye," bless God for that mercy. And though you found neither sorrow nor joy, but a distressing deadness, dulness, and coldness, during the whole service, yet perhaps subsequently you manifested more of the "peaceable fruits of righteousness;" possibly you enjoyed the next season of public worship more, or you felt under new obligations to a life of circumspection and holiness; and undoubtedly these were real benefits. God is not confined to our notions of times and seasons, nor to our way of giving his blessings; but infinite in his wisdom and boundless in his love, he gives them as will best promote our highest good. But still you say, you are distressed under the mortification of disappointed expectation. Were you not unwarrantably expecting a certain sort of spiritual luxury, the luxury of excited feelings; and need you wonder in this case that you find yourself, after receiving, dull and insensible? God deals thus with you, in kindness, for your real good. But do you ask, What is now my duty? A time of darkness is the time for faith; let such a one "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay on his God;" a time of disappointment is the time for resignation and submission to the will of God. But, after all, we would advise you not to judge of yourself merely by sensible feelings. The benefits are here to be expected, in a patient and persevering use of the appointed means; as in the case of prayer, or other means of grace for the food of the soul: or as in food, medicine, or other means of health to the body. But be assured, if you return with one additional proof of obedience to the will of God, one pious resolution confirmed, one vicious propensity checked; if humility be in any measure advanced, faith at all strengthened, love in

any degree enlarged, or hope enlivened, or any Christian grace or temper increased, you have not received without benefit.

Yet, in all, remember God acts as a *just*, and a *gracious Sovereign*. We are unworthy creatures, and deserve nothing from him. By our sins, even in using the appointed means, we forfeit all claim to the benefit. If he refuses to give, we must hide our faces in the dust, acknowledging his justice and our unworthiness. If he gives any blessing, all the praise and glory belong to the riches of his grace.

In closing this chapter, another point calls for attention. The ministers of Christ are often sent for to administer the Lord's Supper to the sick and dying. In some cases, those who send, seem to think it a kind of passport to heaven, with which they are safe, and without which they are lost. This is a total mistake of its true nature. If their neglect proceed not from their own wilful fault and disobedience, they may go to heaven without it; while, if they receive it in a self-righteous spirit, they may perish with it. Regeneration, faith in Christ, contrition, humility, love, holiness, these things mark the heir of glory. Yet, there is, on the other hand, some danger, lest persons of evangelical sentiments, should undervalue this appointed means, and deprive themselves of that comfort, strength, and refreshment, which it is so well calculated to convey. Let the faith of the pious sick and dying be invigorated by these memorials of Christ; let their hope be enlivened, and their affections enkindled by the appointed ordinance for commemorating his death. Many have found it a most blessed means of grace, in that solemn hour when all hopes fail, but those which spring from the cross of Christ.

CHAPTER XI.

The Happiness which would follow its universal and devout Observance.

The Lord's Supper being an ordinance which is eminently calculated to promote our holiness and happiness as Christians, a reasonable prospect of the universal observance of it, in a right spirit, is so delightful, that the author (whose heart is deeply interested in such a hope,) will for a little time dwell upon it.

The following considerations may tend to show that *this hope is not wholly unwarranted*. The general prevalence of Christianity through the whole world, at a future time cannot be questioned. The promise that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea," is, among many others, clear and express. There is also in the Scriptures, a marked connection between the sufferings of our Lord, and the extension of his kingdom. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."—His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men; so shall he sprinkle many nations. —When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." Indeed, it is the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, fully proclaimed, and accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, that is the means of enlarging the kingdom of Christ, and building up his people in their most holy faith. We may well then suppose that an ordinance, commemorating a doctrine specially calculated to advance the conversion and edification of the world, will, when the Gospel is more generally and fully received, be much more constantly observed.

That day also will be marked by a general spirit of holiness. "There shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah, shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them that see thee therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." Zech. xiv, 20, 21. A state of holiness is a state of obedience and dedication to God. At such a time his precepts in general will be carefully observed, and men will be in a suit-

able state of mind to celebrate his solemn ordinances. The effect of bad example now, much counteracts the effect of a plain command; but the example of the good will then be so general, as to have a mighty influence.

We have scriptural authority to expect that the sufferings of Christ will then be remembered with peculiar affection and interest. After the affecting description given of those sufferings in the 22d Psalm, it is expressly promised—"all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." On this passage Diodati observes—"the true and lively knowledge of the sufferings and glory of Christ shall be given to, and preserved among all nations by the preaching of the Gospel; and especially by the Sacrament of his body, therefore called a remembrance." Luke xxii, 19.

We may then reasonably hope that hereafter, as all the ordinances of religion will be much more scrupulously observed and constantly attended than now, so especially, when love to Christ is more extended and more fervent, the ordinance which was appointed by him under such peculiar circumstances as the Lord's Supper, will be carefully and generally regarded.

The author has been in some measure led to these remarks by the following interesting account of one of the first celebrations of this ordinance in New Zealand, an island hardly discovered, or scarcely known to Europeans, till the voyage of Captain Cook.

The Rev. Samuel Marsden, first chaplain to the Colony of New South Wales, in 1819, visited the missions established in this island. After mentioning that divine service was performed on one occasion, on the Sunday, in a shed, where the four great men in New Zealand (Shungee, King George, Pomarre, and Racow) attended; Mr. Marsden says—"all behaved with decorum, and we hope the day is not far distant, when they will know the joyful sound of the Gospel, and have the Lord for their God, in the fullest sense. In the evening we had divine service; and afterwards the holy Sacrament was administered in this distant land; the solemnity of which did not fail to excite in our hearts, sensations and feelings corresponding with the peculiar situation in which we were. We looked back to the period when this holy ordinance was first instituted in Jerusalem, in the presence of our Lord's disciples; and then adverted to the peculiar circumstances under which it was now administered, at the very ends of the earth; where a single ray of divine revelation had never till now dawned on the inhabitants."

Which of our Lord's disciples at its first institution would have imagined it should be observed through extended ages, and in the most remote parts of the earth? and why should *we* not now, who have seen such large steps taken towards such a result as we are considering, hope for its universal observance.

Consider also *the effect of such a universal remembrance* of Christ. When the death of Christ is duly and generally remembered, and has, through the abundant gift of the Holy Ghost, its right influence on men, they will "no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them." Divisions will cease, and Christians *all be one.* John xvii, 21. The whole race of man will be as one vast family, have one will, one heart, one aim, and one labour. It will be felt that there is "one Lord, one faith, one hope, one God and Father of all," above all, through all, and in them all. Righteousness and truth, goodness and kindness, will universally prevail. Love to God, and love to each other will fill the earth as they now fill heaven; and in some happy degree these words will be fulfilled: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

It was once said of the three thousand, first converted to the Christian faith—"they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer." We may hope that this description will hereafter be true, not merely of one body of believers in one place, but of all the va-

rious and multiplied nations of the earth, in every land.

A late writer, in the following paraphrase on that petition in the Lord's prayer, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," has delightfully intimated the blessedness of such a conformity to the Divine will, as we may then expect. "In heaven thy will is the inviolable law. Myriads of ministers encircle thy throne, who cease not to celebrate and serve thee, with uninterrupted praises, and unerring obedience. O that such fidelity were found on earth! that the sons of men did even now resemble that celestial society, to which they hope hereafter to be united! were animated with the like holy ardent zeal, and could give themselves to God with the same entire devotion! We are blind and vain, but thou art wise and good. Wise therefore in thy wisdom, secure under thy care, great and happy in humility and subjection, we have no wishes but in thee. Our whole desire and glory is to be, to do, to suffer, whatsoever thou art pleased to appoint."

Christian reader, does not true zeal for the glory of God, and enlarged benevolence for the best happiness of man, equally excite us to pray and labour for the advancement of such a state of blessedness? What a world would this be, if that peaceful, meek, kind, and tender spirit, in which we often come from the Lord's Table, were universally diffused? Men would be like angels, and earth like heaven. Yes; what a happy world would this be even now, if all men could, on good grounds, hope that they had received the Holy Spirit, were children of God, and going to his heavenly kingdom; and if the communion of the saints were a general blessing. Thus "the Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Isa. li, 3. Supposing the Lord's Supper to be devoutly and universally observed, it would be as "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations."

Let us then remember that there is much within our own reach for aiding the coming on of this blessed time. Every step in the way of righteousness helps to advance and bring it on; every sin which we commit retards its progress, and does something towards hindering not only our own happiness, but the general happiness of the human race. Let us remember, that every additional communicant gained to attend the Lord's Supper in a right spirit, who before altogether neglected it, or attended it only formally, is another inroad on the kingdom of darkness, sin, and misery; and another approach towards the universal establishment of that blessed empire, which "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XII.

On Communion with Christ.

The Communion of the body and blood of Christ, is a means of enjoying communion with him on earth, and also a pledge of that glorious communion which Christians hope for in heaven.

There is a communion, a holy and a delightful interchange of affectionate communication between Christ and his people. This agreement, fellowship, and friendship (and we have the authority of Scripture, for applying even such terms to so high and heavenly an intercourse,) are so near, entire, and intimate, that the same Scripture compares the union between Christ and his people to that of the husband and the wife. Ephes. v, 29—32. The vine and the branches. John xv, 1—8. The body and the members. 1 Cor. xii, 12—27.

It is a communion promised to all his obedient disciples—"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." When Judas, on hearing these

words, asked how the Lord would manifest himself to them, and not to the world; he replies:—"If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Hence it is clear that there is a peculiar manifestation of Christ to his people.

The world, as our Lord intimates, knows not of this communion: it understands it not: it ridicules the idea. But still the real Christian is privileged to enjoy a sensible, perceptible, and enlivening intercourse with his Lord. He has secret and spiritual access to him, and comfort from him. Jesus Christ is his best friend, and his gracious support, refuge, and strength.

Jesus Christ speaks to him *through the holy Scriptures*. Often by them he is touched and affected with godly sorrow for sin, with ardent desires after holiness, and with a lively hope of future glory. Often in reading the sacred volume he hears the voice of Christ, and thus is led to communion with him. His Saviour more directly still imparts grace to his soul, by the gift and teaching of *the Holy Ghost*, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them to us. Thus do we discover his grace and glory, long for his presence, and earnestly seek him. He to whom "all power in heaven and earth is given," speaks again *in his Providence*. If trials and sorrows are sent, consolations are generally at the same time so mingled with them, that in his best moments the Christian thanks God for them. If blessings are bestowed, they are received as given through a Saviour. In every providence, his voice, his hand, and his love may be marked. All are designed to lead us to nearer communion with him. All should be viewed as the manifestation of his care and wisdom, his compassion and tenderness. The Christian has ears to hear this voice, has eyes to see his hand, has a heart to feel this love. He knows Christ and is known of him.

Christians have an unreserved communion with Christ. Drawn by his Spirit, they rejoice to go to him. They love his day, his house, his people, and every path of duty, where they find their Saviour. His grace descends on them, and their hearts are raised to him. "Truly," says St. John, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." There is no friendship on earth so entire, so unreserved, and so invaluable, as that which subsists between Christ and the faithful soul. It is a friendship which has ever subsisted between the believer and his God. Enoch walked with God. Abraham was called the friend of God. Jesus said to his disciples—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth, I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." How many are the benefits of having such a friend! He is a friend always near at hand, ever willing to hear us, who bears with our infirmities, who instructs us with the wisest counsel, gives us the most effectual aid, and never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is an unchanging and unchangeable friend. The Christian's privilege is to know this friend, consult him, ask for his guidance, converse with him, tell him all his sorrows, and all his sins, depend on him for support in all difficulties, for supplies in all wants, and cast all his cares upon him. Thus he has communion with Christ.

This communion is *specially enjoyed at his table*. A blessed intercourse with Christ as of one friend with another, and an exchange of the endearing pledges of mutual love, are what this sacrament is greatly calculated to promote. What Christian has not found, that as the eyes of the disciples at Emmaus were opened, our Lord making himself known to them "in the breaking of bread;" so sometimes now at his table, he manifests himself to his people, and they too are ready to say to each other—"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way?"

Just after the first reception of the Lord's Supper, and with a direct reference to that institution, our Lord said, "I will drink no more of this fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Mark xiv,

25; see also Matt. xxvi, 20. The term *new*, often signifies the excellence, truth, and superior nature of what was so named; and *wine* is a common figure for joy and gladness. "The kingdom of God" may either refer to his spiritual kingdom in this world, or his kingdom of glory hereafter. Under this figure, then, of drinking new wine with his disciples, our Lord may intend to denote the passing away of the Jewish, and the superior excellence of the Christian Dispensation, the joy of his people, through the power of the Holy Ghost, in their Saviour, and his joy in them, both in the church militant on earth, and in that triumphant above. And as the passage is connected with the Lord's Supper, it seems to include a blessed promise of a peculiar communion with his people in their due observance of that institution. In this view of the Lord's Supper, we have here not only communion with our Christian brethren, but have the highest and most delightful communion with our Saviour in that spiritual kingdom, which he has established on earth, as well as the happy prospect of being ever with him in the heavenly kingdom.

The mode of expression—"drinking new wine in the kingdom of God," suggests many encouraging thoughts.

It shows us that Christ there *peculiarly manifests his presence.* Though invisible to the eye of sense, the eye of faith can behold him as the present and the real Head of his family; not only coming in like the king in the marriage supper to see the guests; but, though unseen, presiding over all who assemble around his table, and blessing them according to their wants. How refreshing the thought, that here Christ is, as it were, inviting every faithful disciple to partake of his blessings; saying—"Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" A supply for every want of our souls is thus offered and assured to us. The atonement through his blood, the remission of sins, the love of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and all the blessings of the New Covenant, are afresh exhibited and assured to every believer by the appointed ministers of Christ, and under his special direction.

The expression, "drinking new wine," suggests also, that *freedom* with which we here have intercourse with our Lord. We feel a degree of liberty and freedom with those with whom we are permitted to eat and drink. The Christian has this blessed freedom of access to Him, who is "God over all, blessed for ever;" to one higher than the highest. Our Lord condescends to say—"If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii, 20. The great Monarch that Christians obey, puts on no haughty and distant coldness and reserve; though infinite dignity and glory are shed around him, all is softened by infinite condescension, grace, and love. While Christians have the King of kings for their Lord and Saviour, they have a perfect freedom of access to this great King, even as to a bosom friend.

This communion is calculated to fill us with *joy.* The most enlightened, devoted, and comprehensive mind, cannot conceive a higher joy on earth than that which he experiences, on whom the Lord "lifts up the light of his countenance." The most exquisite earthly enjoyments, the tenderest sensibilities of our nature, joined to the highest delights of human friendship and love, are all poor and vain compared with those superior joys which Christ can and does bestow on his friends. What communion on earth can be like his who died for us, and who lives to make intercession for us? Whose excellencies of wisdom, equity, tenderness, power, and glory, can compare with Christ's? Are we privileged to have access to the "wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace?" surely, the very prospect of it should excite the liveliest desire after it, the enjoyment of it should make the pleasures of the world for ever worthless and tasteless. Christian reader, lose not your happiness in the mere vanities of time and sense, but to seek to rise to the full enjoyment of your amazing privileges.

This subject may well afford great consolation in all the troubles of this life. Whatever your difficulties may be, whether from the state of your affairs, from the perverseness of those around

you, from the power of indwelling sin, or from many temptations; still, spiritual communion with your Saviour in his kingdom of grace, and the hope of full and perfect enjoyment of him in his kingdom of glory, may well both support and console you. Come then to Jesus in every period of sorrow. He is your Refuge and Strength. In communion with him every trouble will be greatly mitigated, or altogether removed. What tongue can tell the happiness of him who lives with his Saviour as with an ever present companion and guide; who has communion with Jesus as an All-sufficient Friend; who became man for our salvation, and is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and sympathises with us!

But communion with Christ here on earth, however enjoyed, whether in daily prayer, in his house, through his providences, by his word, or at his table, is the sure *pledge* of eternal abiding with him in the glory which is to come. Those who hear the voice of Christ, whom he knows and who follow him, are his people, and of them he says—"I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands."

It is not only the pledge, it is also the *foretaste* of this bliss; the beginning of those eternal joys which shall never fail. When in a right spirit you surround the Lord's Table, you have a type and emblem, faint it is true, yet sufficiently significant, of the glorious feast above. Here indeed Christ is only invisibly present, but the spiritual joys here felt, are similar to those above; and the holy feelings here excited, are the beginnings of a more perfect holiness to be for ever possessed hereafter. Here indeed we see him by faith, there by sight: here all that encompass the table are imperfect, there all who surround the throne are perfectly holy. Here they are soon obliged to separate; there they go no more out, but live in the perpetual enjoyment of holiness, love, eternal glory, and the presence of Christ. But to have at this table any earnest of the future inheritance, and any anticipation of its songs of triumph, its holy joys and its blessed employments, may well endear the solemn ordinance to every faithful communicant.

Let us now proceed to notice the *heavenly communion.*

If communion with Christ on earth be so great a privilege, how much greater will be the blessedness of that *which we shall enjoy above!* The highest figures are used to give us some view of the future glory. It is called a kingdom, a father's kingdom; a crown, a crown of glory. It is Paradise, the Paradise of God; a marriage supper, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Let us then endeavour to contemplate the exceeding bliss of that day under the figure of drinking new wine in the kingdom of God. Thus St. John describes that scene of glory—"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready, and to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." Rev. xix, 7—9.

Conceive, then, the immortal soul prepared and made meet for that eternal inheritance; wholly free from all guilt and pollution, and admitted into the heavenly company; and then we shall be able to form some better idea of that supreme happiness which we can never fully conceive here below.

Let us first notice *the joy of our Lord in the happiness of his people.* Is there a purer or higher joy than the perfect happiness of those whom we love, when we have contributed to it? Such is the joy of our Lord and Saviour. What words can declare his love to his redeemed? How he loved them with an everlasting love, loved them when enemies, died for them, strove with them; and, when perverse and obstinate, overcame them even by love itself! They are "the travail of his soul," and their happiness is the reward of his sufferings. In the scene of ineffable glory of which we now speak, Christ beholds them completely blessed in him, and with him

His, and his Father's glory, are in a new way manifested to all created intelligencies by the bliss of ransomed sinners. For this joy "he endured the cross." How will the joy of Christ, beloved as he is by the Christian, fill and enlarge every believer's heart with the highest gladness.

The Christian shall there *behold the glory of Christ.* We think the Apostles and first disciples favoured, who beheld his veiled glory. We wonder not at Zaccheus climbing a tree to get even a glimpse of the Son of God, when he dwelt on earth. Christian reader, realize by faith, for a moment, the delightful thought that your eyes shall behold your beloved Saviour in glory, and be able steadfastly to gaze on his matchless beauty, without being confounded by the effulgence of his brightness! Hard it is for us now to raise our souls to any view of him by faith; but then, without difficulty, wandering, or effort, we shall, with perfect ease and happy freedom, behold our gracious Redeemer "face to face, and see him as he is."

We shall also *hear the words of Christ.* What heart can imagine the bliss of that day, when Christ himself shall speak to you—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then we shall, not as now by painful studies, by the experience of many trials, by continual struggling and effort in prayer, attain some faint knowledge of God and his ways, for Christ himself shall converse with us, and we with him. Then will he show us the wisdom and love of our heavenly Father, in all that now seems dark and obscure, for he will fulfill that promise in its greatest and fullest meaning—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And not only will the goodness of our Heavenly Father be thus discovered to us in all past events, but we shall enter into a far deeper knowledge of his excellence than we can now conceive, and shall better understand the declaration—"This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

We shall also *constantly dwell with Christ.* Here the Christian has in some happy moments had a transient glimpse of his future bliss, and occasionally has been filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But how transient! How soon the eye of faith becomes dim! How soon the affections again sink and grovel on the earth! How soon the spiritual view of the glory and presence of Christ disappears! It will not be so there. That prayer will then be fully answered —"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" perpetually with me, never more to be separated—"that they may behold my glory." Happy would the Christian be, did no sin now obscure the light, and damp the joy of communion with Christ. Happy would he be could he always live with Christ, and always be near and close to him. It will be so then. We shall never, through corruption, leave him; and he will never be provoked, by sin, to leave us.

Thus shall the Christian *share the joys of his Saviour.* That high and holy fellowship and friendship, which began on earth, and here afforded some bright beams of peace, and hope, and happiness, shall be perfected above. O what heart can now conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love him! We shall understand what we cannot now even imagine; we shall know in our happy enjoyment of them the full meaning of those words—"In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Nor, having mentioned in a former chapter the communion of saints on earth as one of the benefits connected with a due reception of the Lord's Supper, must we altogether pass by that far more exalted, and that perfected *communion of saints in heaven;* when, without any alloy of sin in ourselves, or in them, we shall join the heavenly hosts in glory. The heart of the believer, in the lively exercises of faith, almost sickens with desire to enter the blissful society of "the spirits of just men made perfect;" to be like the holy angels, and ever with them; to join the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, and the whole church universal and triumphant. Who can tell

the enraptured emotions of the redeemed soul, escaping from the snares of every enemy here, when we shall ascend to dwell with none but friends; none but holy and blessed spirits, full of love and of happiness! What will it be to associate with them, to partake their bliss, for ever to leave this lower scene of darkness, toil, and conflict, and there "to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven!" O Christians, how eagerly should we look for, how earnestly haste unto, and how diligently prepare for the coming of that day!

CHAPTER XIII.

The due improvement of the Lord's Supper.

The design of this chapter is to furnish such hints as may assist the communicant to obtain practical advantage from his observance of this institution, in his subsequent course. The state of mind which is fostered at the Lord's Table, the feelings there excited, and the blessings there enjoyed, should be brought into practical application, and maintained by watchfulness and prayer. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought." 2 John 8.

Some seem to think that if they have received the outward elements in a serious manner, abstained from their worldly business before and after, restrained their tongues from rough and unkind remarks, and behaved with sobriety for the day, that then they have done an acceptable service to God. But, Christian reader, let our aim be higher and better than this. Seek duly to improve the ordinance, so that it may be a fresh spring to a holy life.

In attending to the due improvement of the Lord's Supper, it may be expedient, first to review what is past, and then to notice the duties to which the faithful communicant is specially called. Such a work necessarily calls for retirement and reflection. Self-recollection, and communion with God in secret, should therefore succeed, as soon as we have opportunity, to our more public employments.*

Suppose then the Christian to have retired to his closet, one of his first duties will be *to review the state of his mind* during the past solemnity.

In order to ascertain whether it has been such as we may have reason to hope will, on the whole, through the merits of the Redeemer, be acceptable to God (Rom. xiv. 18;) let us make a few practical inquiries, with reference to the exercise of those graces which we have before shown to be necessary to receiving the Lord's Supper with benefit; such as repentance, faith, gratitude, and charity (see chap. ix;) and with reference to those directions which have been before given for the employment of the mind during the communion service.—See Chap. x.

The chief thing is, have you duly remembered Christ at his table? You may know this by the holy tempers and dispositions which such a rememberance is calculated to produce and increase.

A due remembrance of Christ will increase *penitence* and sorrow for sin. The contemplation in a right spirit of the only begotten of his Father, "wounded for our transgressions," is evidently calculated to produce fresh convictions of the evil and guilt of all sin; and contrition and compunction for our many, our wilful, and our repeated transgressions. When with the eye of faith we look to him *whom* we have *pierced*, then it is we *mourn* for sin, and our hearts rise in holy indignation against ourselves. Have we, then, felt at the Lord's Table any thing like a deeper and more lively sense of our shameful ingratitude, our cold affections, and our base rebellions? Has this produced in us any feelings of godly

* It is recorded of the pious Bonnell, "When he returned from Church he immediately retired to his closet, and spent a considerable time in his own private prayers and praises. And as his wife was still his fellow communicant, so with her he prayed before dinner; blessing God for that happy opportunity given them both of commemorating our Saviour's sufferings and receiving the pledges of his reconciled favours, and praying for all those who had been partakers with them that day, or at any other time, of those blessed means of grace which they had then received."—See Hamilton's Life of Bonnell.

sorrow, and truly humbled us before our Heavenly Father?

If Christ be duly remembered, *gratitude* will be a prevailing sentiment in our hearts. You cannot consider aright your obligations to him without some emotions of love in your bosom. You will be ready to say, Surely I ought to love Christ. He made me, and died for me; he whom I have slighted and neglected, and who yet intercedes daily in my behalf, justly demands my warmest affections, and my whole heart. What friend have I so powerful, so wise, so tender, so forbearing, as Christ? See if there were ever sorrow like his sorrow, and that he underwent for me! Unsolicited, undesired, unwelcomed, he came and stood in the gap between me and eternal ruin. He disclosed the way to endless glory, and he now guides me by his Holy Spirit along the path of life; and can I remember this love aright without some kindling of gratitude in my heart?

To this we may well join *admiration*, as another effect of a due remembrance of Christ. Who is so worthy of our admiration as he who is the source of all the excellence that is in others, and who combines in himself whatever is great, and whatever is good; whatever is worthy of love and of praise? At the Lord's Table you behold the most exalted of all beings giving his life a ransom for you, and tendering to you the blessings which you need. Though he be "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; yet he receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Can we then contemplate this astonishing mystery of redeeming love, without some sentiments of admiration? When the spirit is calm and the heart is pure, can we but admire the grace of Christ, and sing the song,—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing?" The angels above "desire to look into these things," and they sing his praise; can we then, when we remember what he has done, but be warmed with his love, and re-echo the angelic song,—"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever?"

But perhaps you find, on inquiry, that instead of having devout and holy feelings, your *feelings* have been *cold* and *dull*, and your mind has been wandering and distressed. Your examination should tend to ascertain whether there be not a cause for this in yourself. It is true that Christians often find themselves more harrassed by their corruptions at the seasons of devotion, than at other times. The exercises of prayer and communion with God, directly oppose the stream of sin, and its torrent being stemmed, swells more against us. Satan, too, perhaps, peculiarly tempts us at such a season, filling the mind with vain and trifling thoughts; and God permits it to be so, that we may be kept humble. We are ready enough to rest in our services, poor as they are: what would it be if they were wholly right? But while we make these allowances, it is still true, as it has been observed, that "unless in the case of bodily disease, or erroneous views of Divine truth, the want of comfort in religion springs from open or secret sin, from backsliding in heart, or in life. The joy of God's salvation is a holy joy, not to be found in the ways of sin, nor to be experienced in an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God."

Inquire then if any sin yet reign unmortified in your heart. Inquire how you approached to that holy table. On this point we refer you to what has been already said, chap. xi. If you went thither carelessly, not preparing at all, or very slightly, or as a matter of self-righteousness, to make you worthy, as you vainly fancied, to appear before God; in any of these cases, no wonder that you meet with a rebuke, rather than a blessing; and instead of light, found darkness. If you have received ignorantly or irreverently, uncharitably, or with a carnal mind, the advice of Peter applies to you—"Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray to God, if perhaps the thoughts of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Acts viii, 21—23. If you have gone thus carelessly and presumptuously, you have profaned a solemn ordinance, and you have sinned greatly before God. But still be not cast down in despair, as if this were an

unpardonable sin. Now, in your retirement, humble yourself before God, and you may here perhaps first be taught your natural corruption and helplessness; you may here first learn the lessons of brokenness of heart, and sorrow before God. Though we should deeply mourn and carefully watch and strive against every sinful act, yet the wonderful grace of God overrules sometimes even the very failings of his servants to their ultimate spiritual benefit.

Having thus pointed out the review which it is desirable to take of the state of our minds, and given such hints as may assist those who have not received with comfort or apparent profit, or have not duly received, we proceed to point out *the duties to which the faithful communicant is called.*

We have reason to hope that most of those who have duly prepared, will find on their return from this Sacrament, that even when they have had no remarkable elevation, they have still been enabled to go through the duty with seriousness and attention; something of a holy impression is left on their minds, some check is given to the love of sin, and some additional strength for holy duties.

And some can in more favoured periods say, "I enjoyed much of the presence of God, had communion with my Saviour and his people, and it was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

In either of these cases those words are applicable to us, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation,* and call upon the name of the Lord; I will pay my vows unto the Lord now, in the presence of all his people." Ps. cxvi. Great have been his benefits to you. "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you." You have seen that his blood was shed for the remission of sins, and you have been led to contemplate the risen Saviour in heaven as still carrying on the work of mercy; there pleading for you, thence bestowing his Holy Spirit, there preparing a home for you, and there waiting to receive you. Jesus Christ has afresh tendered himself and all his salvation to you through his ministers, and you have received the emblems appointed, not only to exhibit his atonement, but to be given to each of his people personally, to assure them of their individual interest in his salvation. The inquiry under the sense of these benefits should be—"What shall I render unto the Lord?" Christian reader, see what beloved sin you can now for ever put away. Ask yourself—"How can I now set forth the glory of God, and most advance his kingdom? In what possible way can I best manifest my sense of his benefits?" What are the duties to which I am now specially called? We will state them in a few practical directions.

1. *Abound more in acts of devotion.* Let us *praise* our God more. There will ever be a remarkable contrast between God's blessings and our returns. He bestows innumerable blessings. We have nothing to give to him. After having done all, "we are unprofitable servants." But he accepts a thankful spirit as a suitable return for his blessings. "Whoso offereth me praise he glorifieth me." Let us then cultivate a lively sense of God's mercies, and a continual recollection and grateful acknowledgment of them. So shall we most resemble the blessed angels above, whose happiness it is, through all eternity, to praise and glorify God. And "as the beams of the divine goodness everlastingly shine upon them, so there is an everlasting reflection of the same goodness in the incessant returns of praise and thanksgiving from them." Again, let us be more fervent and constant in *prayer.* If we have had, in the Lord's Supper, intimate communion with

* In this term there is an allusion to a custom among the Jews of taking a cup, called the cup of deliverance, salvation, or blessing, at their solemn feasts, or when offering sacrifices for particular mercies; so that is as if David had said, "I will call all my friends together to rejoice with me," and taking the cup which we call the cup of salvation, (because when blessed and set apart we are wont thus to commemorate the blessings which we have received,) "I will magnify the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God my Saviour, before all the company, and then give it to them, that they may together with me praise his name."—See Note, chap. x.

God, let us not lose the benefit by neglecting again to seek him. Not one of the duties which now lie before you, can you fulfill in your own strength. Not one of your enemies can you resist by your own power. You are wholly dependent on the Lord. Go then more constantly and simply to him. If we have obtained many blessings in answer to our supplications, let it encourage us to more frequent prayer. Though we may tell an earthly friend if he will give us our requests, we will trouble him no more; it need not be so with God. Nay, quite the reverse. David says, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." That repetition of request which would be offensive to man, is most grateful to Him in whom all fulness dwells, and who delights to give to them that ask. Let God's benefits, then, in the Lord's Supper, lead you to expect more from him, and to spend more time than ever you have before done in prayer to him. Let us also be more diligent in searching the *Scriptures*. Here is the lamp to our feet and the light that will direct our paths. Here the blessings and the duties of that New Covenant, the ratification of which you have been commemorating, are fully displayed for your comfort and your guidance. Have to say then with David—"I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Ps. cxix. 60.

2. *Remember your greater obligations to obedience.* Though we are bound to fulfill the will of God as his creatures, it is well to have added, as we have done at the Lord's Table, the new, distinct, and additional engagements of holy resolutions and vows, the self-binding authority of devout dedication of ourselves to God. It is calculated to impress more deeply on our minds the solemn duty of obedience to God's holy law. There is also a greater sin in disobedience, after such a voluntary surrender of ourselves to God. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not be slack to pay it, for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee, and it would be sin in thee." Deut. xxiii. 21. If a man keep not his solemn promise and engagement, we call him dishonest and fraudulent. If those that are married, break their vows of fidelity, we consider them as adulterers and adulteresses; what then are we to think of those who break vows of an infinitely stronger and more awful nature—who are unfaithful to God himself? Let us then endeavour to know and to feel with David, "Thy vows are upon me, O Lord," Ps. lvi. 12. The Scriptural rule is "when thou vowest a vow defer not to pay it."* Our first aim then

*I have frequently been asked by pious persons, and especially by some young converts, whether they might not be likely to be more faithful to God, if they considered themselves as making *vows*, similar to those recorded in the Old and New Testaments; and whether it was not lawful and expedient, by some peculiar, and solemn act of self-dedication, to devote themselves more intently to the service of the Redeemer and Saviour of their souls. Much may be said, and very much has been written on this subject. The following observations of Dr. Wardlaw, express in much better terms than I could employ, my own sentiments.

"Of such vows as were permitted and common under the Old Dispensation, we have no recorded and approved examples under the New; nor are any directions given us, for the making or performance of them. Resolutions in the strength of Divine grace, to serve the Lord, to cleave to him and to his word, and to his ways, we may, with propriety, form and express. Of this nature indeed is the language of God's people in their addresses to him, every day; and always has been and always must be.

"'I will go in the strength of the Lord God.' But for the 'binding of the soul' by special obligations, such as imprecatory oaths, whether verbal or written; for bringing ourselves under a bond superadded to the sanction of the Divine command, I am not sure that we have any warrant, either from the conduct or the writings of the apostles of Christ. Paul's vows, recorded in the 18th and 21st chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and others of a like nature, belonged to the Old Dispensation; which had then only 'waxed old, and was ready to vanish away,' and, although virtually abolished by the death of Christ, was not yet, in practice, finally set aside.

"Vows have been a snare to the conscience of many; especially of the weak, who have often been more afraid of transgressing because *God's vows*, they say, *are upon them*, than on account of the simple and immediate obligation of Divine authority. They are apt, too, as every thing must be, that is of our own devising, when they do not produce a spirit of bondage and fear, to engender the opposite one of self-righteous confidence and presumption. Vows of celibacy and pilgrimage; vows of money, houses, and lands, to pious uses; vows at baptism, and the Lord's Supper, at admission to church fellowship; and at ministerial ordination; and the oaths of per-

should be, after receiving, to bring our good resolutions into practice, forsaking our past sins, and performing our omitted duties. As you are no longer your own, let this be your feeling—"I am now fixed, immoveably fixed for Christ and holiness, against sin and Satan. The matter is settled never to be called in question again—I will serve the Lord." Whatever others may do, have a settled conviction that you can no longer halt between two opinions. You must be 'steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord." When a temptation presents itself, let us then put it off, saying, as Earle remarks, 'Is such an action becoming what thou didst lately at the Lord's Table promise? is such a conduct worthy of a Christian, and becoming for a communicant? Does the indulgence of such a fleshly lust become a disciple of the holy Jesus, the immaculate Lamb of God? Is pride, passion, malice, envy, and uncharitableness, suitable to the solemn profession of returning to him, who came to destroy the works of the Devil?" Let us remember also, that our obligations are not of a transitory nature, but for our whole lives. There are those who will be very strict for a little time after the sacrament, but soon return to their former sinful liberties. Such conduct seems to show that they have not yet been acting under the feeling of gratitude and love. We should not obey under the restraint of fear, the bondage of an unwilling mind, reluctantly brought to discharge the outward services; but freely and gladly giving God our whole hearts.

3. *Endeavour to retain the holy feelings that have been excited.* You are returning to a chilling and distracting world. The devout and heavenly thoughts which filled your mind at the Lord's Table, may soon be dissipated and lost. It should be our aim and effort to gain the spirit of holiness as a blessed habit of our minds, so that we may not be holy only on a sacrament day, but holy at all times, and in all places. This is that "spiritual mind which is life and peace," and till we gain this, we shall never truly know the blessedness of real religion. You have perhaps had in this solemn service, or in connexion with it, lively desires excited in your heart after the Saviour's presence and glory; you have been led to aspire after and long for those superior joys which are "at his right hand for evermore;" and have been ready to say, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." O then after the enjoyment of such feelings and desires, let us no longer cleave so to the dust as to make this world our resting place, and our portion, as we have heretofore done, but rather *set our affections on things above.* You have, perhaps, felt a strength of attachment to Christ, which you have never before experienced. Be it your aim to keep this feeling strong in your hearts, that your love may never wax cold.

4. *Contend more vigorously with your spiritual enemies.* Every time we receive the Lord's Supper, we renew afresh our baptismal vow, and renounce afresh our three great enemies, the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lust of the flesh. O do not merely profess to serve God; do not serve him with your lips only, while your heart is in league with his enemies. Be not so inconsistent as to act in direct contradiction to those solemn professions which you have been making in the presence of God and his people, by again yielding to the temptations of Satan, and walking after the course of this world, and following the devices of your own evil heart. Surely it is a suitable thought after this service, "I have disclaimed the world as my portion, shall I then, for the compassing of a little of its forbidden gain, wrong my brother to whom I ought to do good? wrong my profession, which I ought to adorn? and wrong my conscience, which I ought to keep void of

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onal and national covenanting, although some f them are more objectionable than others, appear alike destitute of New Testament warrant. When the word vow is used, as it frequently is ynonymously, or nearly so, with the word *resolution*, it were idle to quarrel with a mere term. is our duty, however, to beware of ensnaring ur souls, by self-invented and self-imposed obgations, and of every such addition to his will, might draw upon us the reproof, 'Who hath equired this at your hands?'"—G. T. B.

offence?" In the words of St. Paul, "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of Devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the table of Devils. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Avoid then all unnecessary associations with worldly and wicked people. Do not make them the companions of your choice. Rather say with David "Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." Come out from the sinful practices, the vain amusements, and the trifling pursuits of the world. You belong to a better society; you have higher and holier companions.*

We have noticed that Christians may be specially harassed by their corruptions, at seasons of devotion; and it has been sometimes found that after receiving, they have been much tempted by their great adversary. They have been tempted, perhaps, to think highly of themselves as spiritual and holy characters. Guard against thus falling into pride, the peculiar temptation of the Devil. "Eating and drinking in the presence of Christ," (Luke xiii, 36,) are by no means decided proofs of eminent piety. At other times we are tempted after the enjoyment of a spiritual privilege, to become careless, unwatchful, and off our guard. It is recorded for our admonition, that Peter denied, and all the disciples forsook their master after the Lord's Supper. Let us then "watch and pray." Let us go from the Lord's Supper, not to indulge sloth and negligence, but to a holy walk with God, and a determined conflict with all our spiritual enemies, boldly confessing our Saviour before men, and "speaking good of his name."

5. *Endeavour to attain more of the mind of Christ.* Imitate the Saviour whose death you have been commemorating. O that there were such a love to Christ, and delight in him, and admiration of him, that we copied his graces, and were never contented till we were like him. Let the same spirit animate you which animated him, the spirit of gentleness, meekness, patience, and love; the spirit of faith, devotion, self-denial, and zeal. The disciples should be like their master. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, as he also walketh." The Apostles, from their having been with our Lord, attained something of his holy courage and firmness; and their enemies even "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. O that there were such an evident elevation of piety in every communicant, such meekness, heavenly-mindedness, and self-denial, that all around could see the blessed effects of communion with Christ at his table!

6. *Cultivate a spirit of sincere love,* love to the brethren, and to all men. This duty is here taught with much advantage. Having seen in this ordinance that Christians are all members of the same body, consider what love there should be among them. Let us frequent, and delight in, the society of the pious. David says, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." Surely we ought to have a tender sympathy in each other's sorrows and joys. Let this holy feast teach us disinterested, fervent, pure, self-denying, undissimulating love to the brethren; to be like minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus; to put away as much as possible all coldness, distance, suspicions, and jealousies; and to be open, kind, and tender-hearted, "forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." It has been well said, "let those that have had communion with God in this ordinance be able to appeal to their relations and domestics, and all they converse with, and to vouch them for witnesses, that they

* On the important subject of communicants entering into the gaieties and amusements of the world, I had intended to have offered a few remarks in the form of a Note in this place, where the matter is but slightly touched upon by the author of the Treatise. My remarks, however, were found too extended to be put into a Note, and I have been obliged to throw them into the form of an Essay, and publish them as an Appendix. The reader is therefore referred to the close of this volume.—G. T. B.

have mastered their passions, and are grown more mild and quiet in their families than formerly they were. Let us never give occasion to the enemies of religion to say that the seriousness of religion makes men sour and morose, and that zeal in devotion disposes them to peevishness and passion;"* let us rather show that the more earnest we are in religion, the more we are cheerful and amiable, and loving towards all with whom we have to deal.

This love will be shown in gladly availing ourselves of opportunities to do good, and seeking for such opportunities. It will also manifest itself in attention to the wants of the poor. If we ourselves have richly partaken of the feast which God's mercy has provided for us, "let us send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." Neh. viii, 10. Let us be thoughtful of the spiritual and temporal wants of the afflicted poor around us.

7. *Adorn the Religion of your Saviour.* Let our spirit and temper, our words, and our whole conduct and behaviour, be such as "becometh the Gospel of Christ." How devout, how holy, and how spiritual was the conversation of our Lord, (as we have it recorded from the 14th to the 17th chapters of St. John's Gospel,) after first administering and partaking of this ordinance! O that our conversation, too, like his, may ever after be full of love, and kindness, and devotion! Again, a faithful discharge of relative duties truly adorns religion. 'The master ruling with gentleness; the servant labouring with cheerfulness and fidelity; the husband kind and tender; the wife meek and obedient; the father mixing parental affection with correction; the son manifesting filial love with dutiful submission; and so in every other relation, each fulfilling the duties of their station. This will make our houses temples; and the charity, forbearance, patience, and submission shown one to another in such families, will be the most convincing proof that Christ really dwells under that roof." God has brought you near to him, "that you may be unto him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory." The profession of religion made at the Lord's Table seems to impress this duty of honouring his name with peculiar force. You have been publicly confessing Christ before men, and acknowledging your hope in him before his people. You have also received from him the tokens of his favour. The honour of Christ is then in some measure entrusted to you. The world, perversely enough, and sometimes, alas! to their eternal ruin, judge of Christ and his Gospel by the conduct of his professing people. Your failings may be a stumbling block; your steadfastness in faith, hope, and love, a blessing to many. Christian communicant! your tempers and dispositions should set forth the excellence of Christ to a world in ignorance of him. When the more glorious light of the sun has left us, the mild and peaceful beams of the moon enlighten a land otherwise enveloped in darkness; and give us some faint, yet cheering resemblance of the beauty and benefit of the greater light of heaven. Christian communicant, let your light borrowed from the Saviour, reflect some peaceful and beneficial rays in the midst of a dark world. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

We conclude the whole of this part of the Treatise, by pressing on the reader's attention the importance of observing this ordinance, and repeating the dying charge of the Redeemer,

THIS DO,
IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

* See Henry's Communicant's Companion.

A TREATISE ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART II.

DESIGNED TO ASSIST THE COMMUNICANT IN DEVOUTLY RECEIVING IT.

CHAPTER I.

Helps for Self-examination.

In the former part of this Treatise, the subject of self-examination, as a part of preparation needful before the first reception of the Lord's Supper, has been already considered. But as self-examination is a duty of continual recurrence, we will endeavour to give some farther help to the constant performance of it, and show how far it may be profitably varied.

Well would it be for Christians, if they were in the habit of close daily self-examination. It is not indeed easy, or perhaps practicable, for those engaged in all the bustle of business in large cities, to give much time to this work; but what Christian could not pause for a few moments before his evening prayer, look back on the past day, trace what has been the course of his thoughts, words, and actions; and so be better prepared for all the parts of prayer.*

But before the reception of the Lord's Supper, the duty cannot in ordinary cases be neglected without the breach of a divine precept, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." A watch requires not only to be wound up daily, but at occasional intervals a particular looking into, to be cleaned and oiled afresh.

These general directions may with advantage be first attended to.

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* The following questions have been recommended for this purpose.

Questions for the Evening

1. What mercies have I received this day; answers of prayer; deliverance from evil; common or remarkable blessings?
2. What sin have I committed? What duty omitted?
3. What have I done, endeavoured, or designed for the glory of God, or the good of my neighbours; or what opportunities have I neglected of promoting them?
4. With what success have I encountered those sins to which my circumstances or constitution most incline me; passion, sloth, impurity, intemperance, vanity, &c.
5. Have I been looking to Jesus as my righteousness, my strength, and my example?
6. How have I improved my time this day? Have I made any progress in religion? Have I thought of death and judgment? Have I walked with God?
7. Have I prayed, and how? Have I read the Scriptures, and how?
8. What mercy do I want for soul or body, myself or my relations, that I may now ask it?
9. Have I remembered my promises made at the last sacrament, and how have I performed them?

Questions for the Morning.

1. Did I read and pray, meditate, and examine myself last night; and in what manner?
2. Did I think of God the last thing on lying down, and the first thing on rising up?
3. What sin have I committed in thought, word, or deed, and what duty has been omitted since the last evening?
4. What occasions may I probably have this day of serving God, and benefitting my neighbour?
5. To what temptations am I likely to be exposed?
6. What mercies have I received, and what blessings do I now need?
7. Is it my desire to live this day by the faith of the Son of God? Gal. ii. 20.

1. *Let a fixed time be set apart*, before you receive the communion, *for this duty*. It is a duty that cannot be discharged incidentally or in a moment, nor without some self-denial and resolution.—Something has already been said on this subject;* but, with reference to that examination, which is always desirable when we from time to time receive the Lord's Supper, some farther remarks may be made.

Dr. Owen gives the following sensible directions on this point; "Take care that the time to be spent in preparation, neither entrenches on the occasions of the outward man, nor on the weakness of the inward man. If it does, they will be too hard for us. There is a double direction in Scripture; one is, "God will have mercy and not sacrifice." When the observance of sacrifices sensibly entrenches on duties of mercies, God does not require it. The other is, "bodily exercise profiteth little." When we assign so long a time as wearies our spirits, and observe the time, because of the time, it is bodily exercise; and when the vigour of our spirits is gone, it is not a sacrifice in which God delights.—Prudence is here required."

Yet on the other hand he remarks, "Let not the time allotted be so short, as to be unmeet for going through the duty effectually. Men may be ready to turn their private prayer into a few ejaculations, and going in or out of a room, may serve them for preparation for the most solemn ordinance. This has lost us the power, the glory, and the beauty of our profession, which are greatest and brightest when Christians are most exact in preparation for their duties. After particular sins and mercies, or before particular duties, we should also add a more solemn preparation."

It is impossible to give any rule as to the length of time that should be given. The obligation of persons varies with their situations and circumstances; but we apprehend even those most limited for time, might, by due efforts, even if the time were redeemed from sleep, (in which they would only copy the highest example, Luke vi. 12,) give at least an hour to this duty on some day previous to that on which they receive the Lord's Supper. Those of more leisure might give several hours. Give such time as, consistently with your other duties, you can spare; but let the time in every case be so employed, not as a task but as a blessing; not merely as a requirement, but as a privilege and advantage. Indeed you may be assured, as the result of the experience of many, that the more close, and faithful, and diligent you are in self-examination, the more comfort and benefit you are likely in the result to receive.

But it may be asked, is a man never to receive the Lord's Supper, without a minute and particular self-examination. We may distinguish between the younger Christian, in his first approach to this holy table, and the more advanced Christian, steadily persevering in the ways of God. In our early reception of the Lord's Supper, great care and attention in preparation is of peculiar importance and benefit. But an advanced Christian, who has known and loved the truth for many years, and gradually been growing in grace, has to a certain degree an habitual preparation. Should he unexpectedly find the Lord's Supper to be administered, we doubt not he would receive it with much advantage, without any other than his habitual preparation of mind. Yet even to him we are persuaded it would be profitable to inquire into the course of his conduct, since he last received: and to him the season of retirement and self-reflection, to which this ordinance calls us, is a matter of great and incalculable benefit.

Yet beware of formality and self-righteousness. The author cannot but fear that the general use of "the Week's Preparations," however well intended by those who published them, or those who read them, tends to build up a person in a fancied worthiness and righteousness of his own, which is supposed to fit him to receive those spiritual blessings which the Gospel shows are freely given to the unworthy; or else tends to sink him into a mere formal act without spirit, life, or benefit.

* See Chap. ix.

A second general direction that may be useful is this, *Consider the Holy Scriptures as the great test by which you are to try yourself.* They are the only true standard of self-examination; the touchstone which discovers at once the character of the metal. But as the sacred volume is far too large to be gone through at any particular time, we would recommend the following plan which has been found useful. When you endeavour to ascertain if you repent of sin, read the 51st Psalm, and compare the state of your own views and feelings with those of penitent David. When you examine whether you have a lively faith, read the 11th of Hebrews, and notice there the effects of true faith, and inquire how your faith influences you. When you try your state of mind as to a sense of God's mercy, read the 103d Pslam, and compare your affections with those of the grateful Psalmist. When you would ascertain the state of your soul as to its desires towards God, read with this view, Psalm 63 or 84. When you wish to learn your true character as to charity, read the 13th of the 1st of Corinthians, and thus discover your real state. The ten commandments, the 15th, 24th, 26th, 119th and other Psalms, the Beatitudes, (Matt. v.) and the whole sermon on the mount, the 1st Epistle of St. John, and many other parts of the Scriptures, might be mentioned as peculiarly adapted to this purpose. By thus comparing your state with the most practical and spiritual parts of the word, and varying those parts from time to time, you try yourself by a perfect and infallible standard. Several specimens of questions for self-examination on this plan, are given in this chapter.

It has also been found advantageous, when reading practical books, such as Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Leighton's works, Alleine's Alarm, Walker's Christian, Hall's Christian laid Forth, and similar practical treatises, to make use of them as a means of self-examination, noting down what strikes your mind as displaying your true character before God. The sermons which your hear evey Sunday, furnish you with another test by which to try yourself. A point of inquiry that may often advantageously occupy our attention, is our fidelity in our peculiar circumstances, and in the discharge of relative duties. What does my situation require? What are my difficulties, temptations, and dangers? How do I fulfil my duty as parent or child, husband or wife, master or servant, minister or hearer, brother or sister, poor or rich, in public or in private? Here is a large and very important subject for profitable self-examination.

One more general direction may be added—*Conduct this examination in the spirit of prayer.* If this be neglected, self-examination may only prove a mean of delusion and danger to your immortal soul. We are all prone to think well of and to justify ourselves.—"The heart is deceitful above all things," and Satan is ingenious to suggest to our minds many excuses for our misconduct. We are prone also to think little of the evil of sin, and to refer to the false standard of what others are doing, rather than what the Bible requires. Sometimes also we are tempted to write hard and bitter things against ourselves. Self-examination under such influences may only tend to deceive us; to harden us; or to sink us into despair. It may thus fix us in our errors with increased strength. Fervent prayer is the true remedy for this. God who searches the heart, discovers its true character to those who pray to him, to show them to themselves. Observe how David prays—"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; search me, and know my thoughts; look well if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Ps. xxvi, 2; cxxxix, 23, 24.

The advantages of occasionally reducing to writing the results of this self-examination, are, that it more impresses your own mind at the time, and it may be easily referred to afterwards. Why should not the Christian find as much advantage in making from time to time an accurate estimate of the state of his heart, as a merchant does in keeping accounts of his gains and losses, and making an accurate estimate of the true state of his affairs. Having given these gen-

eral directions, we will proceed to give more particular hints for helping in this important duty.

Let us always begin it with prayer.

A short Prayer before Self-Examination.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, who searchest the heart and triest the innermost thoughts, I beseech thee now to assist me in looking into my own heart, and my own life. Feeling and acknowledging that my heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, I beseech thee to show me to myself. Enable me to try myself by the standard of thy holy word, and discover the true state of my soul; give me repentance, for all my past sins, lively faith in Jesus Christ the only Saviour from sin, deep humility before thee, and such tempers and dispositions as are meet for those who assemble round the table of our gracious Redeemer. These things I ask for his name's sake.

CHAPTER II.

Hints for the Regulation and Employment of the Mind during the Communion Service.

The Communion Service of the Protestant Episcopal Church, with remarks upon it, will be given in Chap. iv, ; the object in this chapter is to assist the Communicant in regulating the general state of his mind, and improving the leisure moments which he will have, while others are receiving the sacred elements.

A devout attendance on the previous services, public worship, singing the praises of God, and hearing his Gospel, are peculiarly calculated to prepare us for the more solemn act of devotion which succeeds.

An interval of time, while those who do not intend to partake of the Lord's Supper are leaving the church, will allow you a favourable opportunity for collecting your thoughts, and offering up a short prayer to God for his presence, help, and blessing.

During the succeeding service, endeavour to maintain a *composed and tranquil spirit.* Some are so agitated by the importance of the service as to lose calmness and self-possession; but let us remember, that we are going to a Father's Table; and let us endeavour to go with freedom and cheerfulness, as well as with seriousness and devotion.

Realize, as much as practicable, *the divine presence.* It is a solemn service in which you are engaged. God is peculiarly present. You are about as it were, "entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus." Heb. x, 19. Receiving unworthily is both sinful and dangerous. With David, then pray—"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The following hints in the way of actual direction may assist in showing you how the time may be most profitably employed while others are communicating, and before or after you yourself have communicated. But it is allowed that there is some danger, lest we should overload the mind of the communicant, and distract rather than help him. Be not then anxious minutely to attend to the whole of them, each time that you communicate. Some may serve to help you at one time, and some at another. You will find it probably more useful, rather to dwell on one or two points, than to be too particular in attempting to attend to them all at one time.

Humble yourself before God. The nearer access we have to God, the more humble we should be. When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, and heard the song of the Seraphim—"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory;" his own sinfulness rushed upon his mind, and his first expressions were—"Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." When the Centurion came to beseech Jesus in behalf of his afflicted servant, and Jesus promised to come and heal him, see how he humbles himself in the promise of such a visiter—"Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only,

and my servant shall be healed." These are expressions suitable for us at this table. True humiliation makes us welcome the atonement of Christ.

Let there be acts of faith in Christ crucified; such a faith as "worketh by love." You are under that New Dispensation where there is a remission of sins, and may therefore "have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Heb. x, 19, 20. Now you should be looking to the crucified Redeemer, with a gracious confidence, as the poor malefactor did, when that Redeemer hung on the cross, and saying to him—"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Luke xxiii, 42. Look to him as those women did who followed him from Galilee, went after him weeping to the place of crucifixion, and came and stood by the cross full of fidelity, tenderness, and love. Matt. xxii, 25. Or again, as that disciple did whom Jesus loved, who waiting on him in his last moments, and received his dying charge, and immediately and steadfastly fulfilled it. John xix. 25.

Make known your requests unto God. It is a favourable time for prayer. Pray, 1. *For yourself.* Sinners are now reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Consider, then, what it is you most need; and be particular in unbosoming yourself to your God, even as a child would be to a kind and loving father. Pray that the service in which you are now engaged may be the means of grace to your own soul, so that you may receive all the blessings designed by that institution, and especially an increase of faith in Christ; a more simple and entire dependence on his death, as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Pray also, 2. *For others;* that they may "obtain like precious faith with you in the righteousness of God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. i, 1. Enlarge your petition as the time will allow. Pray for your partners in life; if worldly and unconverted, wrestle with God for their conversion; if pious, pray that they may abound always in every good word and work. Parents, bring your dear children, as it were, one by one, and by name, before the Lord, and ask for each child a suitable blessing. Masters, pray for your servants. Pass on to the devout recollection of all your relatives and friends, and think especially of the peculiar circumstances of any of them, which may require peculiar aid from God. Pray for your minister, that while he dispenses to others, he may also richly partake of the bread of life, to the nourishment of his own soul; and for your fellow communicants, that as each partakes of the outward symbol, he may inwardly feed on Christ by faith. Pray, too, for all Christians throughout the world. Intercede for all those who have wronged or injured you, striving to enter into the full meaning of our Lord's command, "Love your enemies." Pray for Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics; the death commemorated in the Sacrament, is that of a Lamb to take away "the sins of the world." Let then, a communion day be specially a day of intercession for all men, that God would "pour out his Spirit on all flesh."

Praise God for his manifold mercies. Surely the immense benefit which we are here commemorating should lead us to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles." Never can we view redeeming love aright, without a thankful and grateful heart. If Jesus has done so much for us, surely we may well offer up the rapturous song of praise. "Unto him, that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us to be kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Give yourself up to the service of God. All we are and all we have, are from him; and when such mercies are pre-

sented before us at the Lord's Table exhibits, each should be constrained to "present himself" (freely and voluntarily offering ourselves,) to be a "living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God." Jesus has redeemed us from the death of sin, and eternal ruin; let us then, "yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The Lord's Supper is one of the appointed ways in which God calls us, from time to time, to give up ourselves afresh to him. It is an ordinance in which "one shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Isa. xliv, 5.

Make holy resolutions in the strength of Divine Grace. Now is the time to determine more firmly to strive against all sin, and more resolutely to fulfill all your duties. Deliberately, in the presence of God, and his saints, now in your secret devotions, express your steadfast purpose to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful workers of darkness, but rather to reprove them;" and that, however assailed and tempted, you will, in the strength of Christ, and quickened by his death, be faithful unto him. Now is the time to decide upon and bind yourself to more enlarged charity. When Zaccheus was honoured with the presence of our Lord under his own roof, he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give unto the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." It was on this determination that he was gladdened by that cheering assurance—"This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he is also a Son of Abraham." And when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, we should be forming purposes and plans how we may most effectually lay ourselves out to him.

This is also a proper time for *meditation* upon divine subjects. We shall endeavour, in a subsequent chapter, to furnish some help in the discharge of this duty. Let us have ready some affecting passages of God's word relating to the love of God in Christ, and the Saviour's sufferings and death, and think on them till the Holy Spirit touch and inflame our heart with some kindlings of love to God, and some breathings after him.

CHAPTER IV.

On the Communion Service of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

[The Communion Service of our church in this country differs in its arrangements from the service of the Church of England. These differences, however, are very immaterial, and do not in the least respect the doctrine contained in either. Small as they are, however, they have compelled me to relinquish the idea of merely putting notes where any explanation seemed to be required; and I have rather chosen, as the most practicable method, not to adhere to the arrangement of the author. The American reader would of course prefer to have remarks on the Communion Service of his own church, rather than on that of the Church of England, even though there should not be any considerable variation between the two. Several of the *Rubrics* attached to the Communion Service of the latter, are merely matters of local arrangement, arising from the peculiar circumstances of a church establishment; and in the body of our service some alterations have been made by the General Convention of 1789, by the transposition of some parts. In this chapter, as it stands in the original work, the greater part of the service is also published. I have thought best merely to refer to this, as the publication of the whole Communion Office would have increased the bulk, and consequently the expense of the work—have precluded the possibility of some important observations, and on the whole been unnecessary, as it is very easy for the reader to take the Prayer Book in his hand, and refer to the passages as he goes along. On these grounds I have thought best to pursue the present plan; the author's remarks will for the most

part be retained, and all that is added, will be placed within brackets, thus, [ ] with the exception of a few notes, which cannot properly be put into the text.—G. T. B.]

The nature of the Lord's Supper, and the whole of its design, are practically and devotionally brought before us in our Communion Service. We are here, also, furnished with a test of those dispositions which are needful for a due reception of this ordinance. It has been well remarked, "Read over attentively the service of our church, and if you can join heartily and sincerely, with the spirit and with the understanding, in the prayers, the confession, and the thanksgiving that are there, you are indeed meet to be a partaker of those holy mysteries."

It is hoped that the following observations on the Communion Service, may assist the devotions of the Communicant. We have an excellent form of sound words, which we shall do well to hold fast; (2 Tim. i. 13.) but, we should ever remember, that there must be something besides the form of words, however admirable they may be, to communicate the life and feeling of devotion; even the life-giving Spirit of Jehovah. We may repeat the words with our lips without any desire or feeling of the heart. God may have to say of us, as he did of Israel, "They have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them!"

The whole of this service may be considered as a public record of the most solemn and important transactions that can take place on earth, between the fallen spirit of man, accepting salvation by Jesus Christ, and "the God of the spirits of all flesh," giving the pledge of that salvation by his Ministers.

The service begins with the Lord's Prayer; well may we commence this solemn transaction with addressing God as a Father, and with petitions for the advancement of his glory, the gift of our daily bread, and the forgiveness of our own sins, with a profession to forgive all others sinning against us. These petitions will all bear an edifying reference to the important duty in which we are about to engage.

The affecting prayer that God would "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit," is adapted to our fallen and impure state, unable of ourselves to think any thing aright, and yet hoping for the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. To pray that we may perfectly love God, is a suitable introduction to the ten commandments, which are next brought before us, Love being the fulfilling of the law.

The compilers of our Liturgy knowing that "by the law is the knowledge of sin," and that a penitent heart is most needful for a due reception of the Lord's Supper, have well placed at the commencement of this service, *the ten commandments*, containing a comprehensive summary of the holy law of God. We must not suppose that these precepts relate only to the outward act of sin; our Lord has shown us that they forbid that principle, or love of sin, which leads to outward iniquity. When, for instance, it is said, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me," it forbids our forgetfulness of God, and our love of the world; "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." When it is said, "Thou shalt do no murder;" angry thoughts, and malice, and revenge are forbidden, as well as murder. When we are told, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" impure thoughts are equally forbidden. This manifestly is the obedience which the Lord of all requires. Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28. Hence you observe, that after every command the congregation are directed to say, "Lord have mercy on us," hereby, as it is said in the rubric, "asking God mercy for their transgressions thereof for the time past.," You should inquire, therefore, whether, when you have repeated these words after each command, you really felt that you had in the sight of God broken that command, and needed his pardoning mercy. We are farther taught to add, "and incline our hearts to keep this law." This plainly expresses, if we repeat it in sincerity, that we are convinced that we have neither natural inclination, nor pow-

er of ourselves, to obey God's holy commands; but look up to him, and depend wholly on him, to dispose and enable us to do his will; and really purpose and desire to obey his holy law.

The *collects* for each Sunday are generally adapted to prepare our minds for the portion of Scripture selected from the Epistles and Gospels. Our church, after the declaration of the law in the ten commandments, brings before us some suitable and affecting portion of the Gospel of that Saviour, by whom we are "redeemed from the curse of the law."

The Apostles', or else the *Nicene Creed* follows. [The Apostles' creed is so called, not that any one may suppose it written by the Apostles, but simply because it contains the doctrines they preached, and was probably drawn up about the time they lived.] The Nicene creed is so called because it was for the most part framed at the great council held at Nice, in 325. It is right and suitable after reading the word of God, and before we communicate together, that we should mutually acknowledge the same faith. [These are not ordinarily read on communion days, as one of them must have been read before in the morning service, and they are here omitted to prevent unnecessary repetition.]

The part of this service that we have hitherto considered, is directed to be read every Sunday, as it were to invite Christians to more frequent communion. And observe how far we have now been led. The holy law of God having been set before us, we have been taught to acknowledge ourselves guilty and helpless. The Gospel of Christ being then read, we have been called on to express our faith in God as our Father, Jesus as our Saviour, and the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier. Retrace, then, your thoughts. Have you been sincere when you have repeated this service? Have you felt, as well as acknowledged, your sinfulness and your weakness? Has the Gospel really been good tidings to you? Was the profession of faith repeated in the creed more than a mere expression of the lips? Was it the unfeigned confidence and conviction of an upright and true heart? If you have proceeded thus far in sincerity, you are a penitent believer; you are in a fit state of mind to receive the Lord's Supper.

We now come to that part of the Liturgy which is more directly connected with the administration of this Institution.

The Sunday before that on which it is designed to celebrate this ordinance, a suitable *exhortation* is appointed to be read. Two are given in the Prayer Book. One contains directions to prevent our receiving it in a careless or presumptuous spirit; and the other urges those to come who are in the habit of neglecting. You would find it useful to read these to assist you in your preparation.

When assembled together at the Lord's Table, you are called on, by a selection of appropriate passages, to contribute according to your means to the relief of your poorer brethren. Thus an opportunity is given you of showing your faith by your works. Our Saviour seems to suppose we should never come here before the Lord without a gift. Matt. v, 23. [These passages need not be repeated, as they are found in the service, which it is hoped will be referred to particularly while the reader is engaged in this part of the treatise.]

[While these sentences are reading the proper persons are to receive the alms of the congregation, which money is to be devoted to the poor and to other pious uses.]

At giving your alms, this, or the like ejaculation may be used:

"All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." 1 Chron. xxix, 14.

Our charity towards our fellow creatures, and especially towards our fellow Christians, is farther manifested by an earnest prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church militant.

[To this prayer succeeds an exhortation, which is only used at the communion; and which is particularly worthy of the attention of all from the deeply solemn considerations which it presents to the mind.]

In it we are here specially urged to self-examination and thankfulness. Self

examination is urged on account of the danger of coming unworthily. The word "damnation" must not be here understood of eternal destruction, but the just condemnation and displeasure of God.* Self-examination is also pressed on our attention from the benefit of duly receiving, as then we are partakers of Christ's salvation, "we dwell in Christ and Christ in us." What an intimate and blessed communion does this describe! O reader, seek to know its blessedness in your own experience! We are called on in the latter part of the exhortation, to be thankful for the inestimable benefit of redemption, the chief thing ever to be regarded in the Lord's Supper. Notice the confession, "miserable sinners," &c. Have you felt that this is your true character? It is easy to express this sentiment, but it is very difficult really to feel it. Yet without a real conviction of your true state, you cannot be cordially thankful for your redemption. You can neither duly prize, nor heartily thank, Jesus Christ. The latter part of the exhortation shows us, that the true comfort of the soul is, Christ crucified for our sins, and Christ expected to appear again, to complete our happiness. We should hear the whole in the spirit of prayer, sending up in secret such ejaculations as these, "Lord grant that I may receive these benefits." "Lord deliver me from this danger."

The characters by whom comfort may be expected are described in the following *address:*—

Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sin, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, kneeling.†

While this is repeating by the Minister, we should also be lifting up our hearts to God, to give us grace to repent, and be in love with others, and walk in the ways of God.

To this succeeds a general *confession*, to be made both by the Minister and people, all kneeling.*

We here, in most just and abasing expressions, deplore our sinfulness. This

* See the passage from Corinthians, particularly examined in Chapter VIII.—G. T. B.

† See these qualifications enlarged on in chapter ix.—G. T. B.

* There seems some considerable deficiency in the rubric, as it regards the posture to be maintained by the people during the several parts of the communion service. The following judicious remarks of Bishop Brownell in his Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer, are well worthy the attention of all.—"There is often much diversity in the same congregation; and individuals are embarrassed with considerations concerning the attitude which propriety requires, while they should be engaged in the most solemn acts of devotion. The English Liturgy is not more explicit in this matter than our own; and it is much to be wished that we might have some proper regulations set forth by authority. Until this shall be done, the following directions are suggested as the dictates of propriety.

1st. The people are supposed to be seated during the offertory, but when the minister calls upon them to join in prayer "for the whole state of Christ's Church Militant," let them assume the attitude of kneeling.

2d. At the close of this prayer, let the people rise and continue standing during the exhortation, and the invitation to the communion. This attitude will indicate their readiness to hear, and their willingness to come. Indeed the succeeding rubric must suppose them to be standing, (or in the less appropriate posture of sitting,) for it calls upon them to kneel, at the confession which follows.

3d. As the posture of kneeling is required during the confession, so let it be continued till the close of the absolution.

4th. After the absolution the priest calls upon the communicants, to hear the comfortable words of their Saviour, and here let them rise, and listen to them with gratitude, and let them continue standing during the sentence, the versicles, the proper preface, and the trisagium.

5th. This Eucharistic part of the service is followed by an act of humiliation by the priest, "in the name of all those who shall receive the communion." As he is directed to kneel, it is proper that they should assume the same posture; and it seems also proper that they should continue in the same attitude during the succeeding prayer of consecration.

6th. This most solemn part of the service is followed by the singing of a hymn, which is performed standing.

7th. The consecrated bread and wine is directed to be received "devoutly kneeling;" and this should be the posture during the whole of the post-communion service, with the exception of the Gloria in Excelsis, which is to be "said or sung, all standing."—G. T. B.

confession should lead us to think of our own personal guilt in any light that may most affect us, and to charge our memory with those views of our own iniquity, which we know by experience, most humble us, and show us with peculiar emphasis, the need which we have of Christ's blood. But while we have reason with the deepest contrition, to confess that the burden of our sins is intolerable,* (being a load that would have sunk us to eternal ruin) let us endeavour to keep our eye on Christ, and by faith transfer our guilt over to him, bewailing our utter unworthiness, glorying in his worthiness, and soliciting through him, not only peace of conscience, but strength for serving him in newness of life.

The *absolution*, or declaration of forgiveness, is then pronounced by the Priest.

All who heartily repent and truly believe, all who have with any feeling joined in the preceding service, may and should here apply to themselves the comfort of the Gospel as declared by the appointed Minister of Christ. But man's words cannot of themselves speak peace to the troubled conscience; and therefore the Minister's declaration of forgiveness is confirmed by well chosen passages of Scripture, of course not necessary here to repeat.

These passages should be heard in faith and prayer. They are indeed most comfortable. They tell the weary, burdened, and troubled conscience—Take not God's pardon on my word, I have a commission from above. Hear our Saviour Christ, hear St. Paul, hear St. John speak and say, "Poor, burdened, troubled sinner, here is peace for thee; Christ takes away all thy sins, and will give thee everlasting life."

It will have been seen, that there is set forth in this service, as has been noticed, one of the most solemn transactions, that can take place on earth between God and man. "If we have been in earnest, if we have rightly joined in it, we are justified by faith, we rejoice in God, and we have peace of conscience. High, and holy, and blessed is our state; we are children of God, and heirs of everlasting life."

[After this follows a very short responding part, and after a pious acknowledgment by the Priest of the duty of at all times giving thanks to God for his mercy, follows one of the most sublime hymns which is to be found among all human compositions; indeed, it can scarcely be said to be human, as the language is almost exclusively that of the Scripture.

Dean Comber remarks—the prophet Isaiah heard that hymn with which the angels, cherubims, and seraphim praised God in heaven, (Isa. vi, 3,) which because the word "holy" is thrice repeated in it, was by the Greeks called Trisagium; and because the primitive church believed the angels were present in Christian assemblies, (1 Cor. xi, 10;) and that they desired especially to look into these mysteries, (1 Pet. i, 12;) considering also that the "thrice holy" plainly declares the trinity, the peculiar doctrine of the Christians; therefore they did, in the very first ages, take this hymn into the office for the Sacrament, believing it

* The language which is here employed is so strong, that it has been a stumbling block in the way of many an individual, who would have gladly, and I have no doubt with proper preparation of heart, have knelt at the Lord's Table. The correct understanding of the passage seems to be, not that the sorrow which we that moment feel for sin, is so extreme as to be almost utterly insupportable, but that the guilt of sin is such that if not removed, it will bring upon us a punishment greater than we can imagine, and intolerable to be borne. If in the use of this confession, we are to understand the term alluded to in its strictest sense, a really conscientious person might feel compelled to abstain unless conviction of sin was in its deepest exercise. This can scarcely then be meant, because a sinner under his first convictions can realize little more than what is implied in the confession, that the burden of sin was intolerable. I would not wish to make the qualifications of a communicant one item less than what is written—indeed I think it a pity that the scale is not graduated higher than it commonly is, but at the same time I would not throw an impediment in the way of those of tender consciences; for it is a well ascertained fact, that those best prepared, most generally are most doubtful of themselves. If the interpretation above given shall be correct, I am satisfied; but wish every one to be fully persuaded in his own mind.—G. T. B.

fit for angels and men to join in this heavenly song, over the memorial of our redemption.]

After these holy songs of praise, the minister offers up, in the name of the congregation, that most affecting prayer, which commences—

"We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness," &c.

In this prayer the church adopts similar expressions to those of Daniel, of the humble and lowly feelings which most become us after our best preparations, and in our highest devotions, and most intimate communion with God. "We do not presume to come, trusting in our own righteousness." There appears also an evident allusion to the history of the Canaanitish woman, only with a still more debasing expression: she said, "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table;" (Matt. xv, 27;) but we are taught with our heart and mouth to confess ourselves "not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs," &c. In stating our title to God's acceptance, all our works are to be utterly renounced as of no worth. The worthiness of Christ is all we have to plead.

[The Priest then says the prayer of consecration, the oblation, and the invocation. These two latter are not in the English service. They were restored to the Communion Service by the General Convention of 1789, from prayers originally employed.

After these are over, the communicants are called upon to unite in a hymn of praise to God, from the authorised hymns of the Prayer Book.

The Minister then receives the communion himself, during which silent and solemn period, the communicants may be profitably occupied in the following, or similar exercises.]

At the Minister's laying his hands on, and breaking the bread.

May thy stripes, O Saviour! heal my soul; and do thou ever feed me with the bread of life.

At the Minister's taking the Cup.

Wash me, O Lord Christ! in thy most precious blood, and clease me from all my sins.

Before receiving the sacred elements.

"The good Lord pardon me, and every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. 2 Chron. xxx 18, 19.

The consecrated elements are to be given to the people kneeling.

If there are many communicants, you may find this a suitable opportunity for private prayer and meditation. See chapters iii, and v, in this part of the Treatise.

When the Minister delivers the bread to any one he says,

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.

And when he delivers the cup to any one, he says,

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.

In both these addresses we have a prayer and a direction. The prayer should lead us to commit our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, unto God; and the direction puts us in mind, in the very act of receiving, of one great end of this ordinance, to feed on Christ in our hearts by faith, with thanksgiving. —"When the Minister says, Take eat, Drink ye all of it, let us think how freely God offers Christ to us, and how earnestly he presses us to accept of him as our Saviour." And surely, as we have fresh need of pardon every time that we communicate, so should we afresh seek an interest in our Saviour's righteous-

ness, and the washing and cleansing of his most precious blood.

Such thoughts as these may suitably engage our minds.

At taking the Bread.

I desire to remember Jesus Christ dying on the cross.
I believe that he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God.
Let me now receive out of his fulness all I need.
I trust in him alone for eternal life.
I take Christ for my only Saviour and Lord.
I give myself to his service.
I look forward to his coming again.

At drinking the Wine.

I desire to remember that his blood was shed for me.
I believe that that blood cleanseth from all sin.
I mourn for my many sins that pierced him.
I humbly lay claim to the New Covenant blessings.
I freely and heartily forgive all my enemies.
I desire ardently to love all the people of Christ.
All praise be to God for his unspeakable gift.

The Post Communion, or service immediately after receiving, begins with repeating again the Lord's Prayer, which after such services as have been described, may well affect us with new feelings, leading us to call on our Heavenly Father with a peculiar measure of the spirit of adoption.

A devout thanksgiving is then offered up, in which also we ask for grace to continue in the holy fellowship to which we have been admitted. The language is expressive of the feelings of a mind which came indeed with a load of guilt and bondage on the conscience, but goes away pardoned, peaceful, and free. There is an opposite danger to that of self-righteous dependence on the Sacrament, that of having too slight thoughts of its utility. Milner observes, "well-disposed persons who often gain both spiritual comfort and strength through sermons, gain nothing from the sacrament. Why is this? They are in too lazy a posture of soul; they do not reverently esteem, as they should, this precious mean of grace, as the channel in which the comforts of salvation may be expected richly to flow. Our Reformers speak differently of the importance of this Institution. From the expression, 'dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us, and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son,' it is evident that the blessing of assurance was in their idea connected with the right reception of this ordinance." Yet many who obtain not the full assurance of hope, seeking the Lord in earnest, still gain some increase of faith, hope, and love. The consecration here made of ourselves to be "a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice to God," comes with great propriety after the memorial of such mercies. It is according to that exhortation of St. Paul,—"I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." The love of God in Christ Jesus, when brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit, never fails of its efficacy in influencing a man to give himself unreservedly to God.

[The concluding hymn of praise is in that sublime thanksgiving, entitled, "Gloria in Excelsis."]

This hymn seems to unite the seraphic praise of the glorified hosts above, with the deep abasement of the contrite heart on earth. We here copy the example of of our Saviour, who sang a hymn after the institution of the Lord Supper. O had we a due sense of our privileges as sons of God, and our prospects as heirs of his glory, with what rapturous emotion, joined to what deep humility, should we sing this song!

The Minister closes the whole with this *blessing:*

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be

amongst you and remain with you always. Amen.

This blessing seems to include the main benefits of both Dispensations; that of Moses, (Numb. vi, 24—26,) and that of the Lamb, (John xiv, 27; Phil. iv, 7.) It is a parting prayer, that the benefits which we have just received and commemorated, may abide in our hearts for ever.

Inquire then, Christian communicant, whether your feelings in some degree correspond with the holy sentiments of this service. Such an inquiry will be both humbling and profitable. "We would be far from denying the acceptableness of many a real communicant who may not come up to that full fervour of soul which is evidently the spirit of the institution." But by aiming at the highest degree of communion with our unseen but ever present Lord and Saviour, we are best promoting our own edification and happiness.

Who can but mourn, that any that frequent this ordinance should be dead to every spiritual sensation, go through the whole in a formal, lifeless manner, and depart as cold and worldly as ever.

But what shall we say to those who frequently, or altogether, deprive themselves of the benefits of this institution. They are like those who would prefer dwelling in a miserable and decaying hovel, when they might reside in a king's palace. They are like those who had rather feed on husks and swine, than banquet at the table of a loving and bountiful Father.

Christians! neglect not the opportunities afforded you of receiving the pledges of a Father's love. Can you too often remember the grace of a dying Saviour? Can you, more frequently than you desire, receive the assurance that God is reconciled to you; that his Spirit dwells in you, that you are his children, and that heaven is your home? These are the blessings you enjoy when devoutly partaking of the Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER V.

Meditations during the Communion.

We have given in a former Chapter directions for the employment of the mind in the interval while others are partaking of the communion. We will now add a few meditations that may occasionally assist the communicant at that time.

Prov. iv, 26. *Ponder the path of thy feet.*

If ever it be needful to ponder my goings, surely it is so on this occasion. Let me inquire, then, with what views am I coming to this holy table?

I come, I trust, to commemorate the death of Christ; to call to remembrance that sacrifice of himself which he once made upon the cross; to profess my faith in Christ crucified; to declare before God and man that I look to him as my only Saviour and Redeemer, who has made a complete atonement for my sins, and has reconciled my God to me, and me to my God. I come to receive the tokens of reconciliation, and the pledges of pardon and love.

Looking to my Saviour, I come that I may receive from him all that is wanting in my wretched self. *He is full of grace and truth.* He has called me to do this in remembrance of him; and I come, hoping for his blessing on what he himself has appointed.

Looking at myself, I come as an unworthy, sinful, and dreadfully guilty creature, to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; not because I am worthy, but because my God is merciful to returning sinners.

Looking at *the society which I join*, the select disciples of Christ, I desire to come feeling that I am the unworthiest and the least of all, and to acknowledge with them our common hope in our Lord and to partake of their privileges, and enjoy in, and with them, the communion of saints.

O my Saviour, preserve me from hypocrisy, formality, and self-righteousness; and let me never by my conduct betray thee, while I am professing to embrace thee.

1 Pet. v, 1. *The sufferings of Christ.*

"O my Saviour, and my God, I desire to call to mind every part of thy bitter passion. I would begin by recollecting thy lying prostrate on the earth in a cold night, and thy soul's being exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and thy grievous agony, in which thou didst sweat drops of blood.

"Thrice did my Redeemer lift up strong cries to his Father, to remove that bitter cup, if it had been his will, and it had been possible for his justice otherwise to be satisfied; and then firmly did he resolve to go through that great work for our sakes. He meekly resigned himself to his Father's will, and readily concurred with his wonderful love to us, in designing to perfect our redemption. He was betrayed by his own disciple, and suffered that traitor who betrayed him to kiss his blessed lips. He was apprehended, rudely bound, and hurried away as a malefactor, and forsaken by all, not one of his disciples daring to own or stand by him.

"Again, I would remember his being insulted over and treated as the meanest slave, without respect, or pity, and carried to and fro, from magistrate to magistrate, from tribunal to tribunal, and every where falsely accused. He was buffeted and spit upon, mocked and reviled. He was crowned with thorns, rudely pressed down on his sacred head, and entering into his temples. He was arrayed in a mock habit, and a reed put into his hand instead of a sceptre. He was sentenced to death as a criminal, and condemned to the vilest, most painful, and reproachful kind of death. He was scourged by merciless hands; the plowers plowing on his back, and making long furrows.

"I would farther contemplate his being loaded with a heavy cross, stripped of his clothes, and fastened to the wood with nails struck through his hands and feet, the most tender and nervous parts, so that "the iron entered into his very soul." Thus he was crucified in the midst, between two malefactors, as if the chief criminal. He was then reared up on the cross, and the weight of his body hung on four wounds. He was there suspended, and exposed naked to the view of the world, bearing the shame, as well as the torment of my sin. The precious blood issued out of his wounds, and formed a laver for my sins, and those of the whole world. The extremity of his pain occasioned a feverish heat of the whole body, and his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth. He had vinegar given to him when he was thirsty; his soul, in the mean time, more vehemently thirsting after our salvation. He refused the wine and myrrh, as if he would feel all the pain of his crucifixion for us, in its greatest sharpness, without the least mitigation.

"I would call to mind also the tender regard which thou hadst, O my Saviour, in the midst of thy violent pains, for thy holy mother and beloved disciple; the sword pierced through her soul, and deep sorrow wounded his spirit, and extreme anguish overwhelmed them both, to behold the suffering Redeemer; and in the midst of thy sorrows thou thoughtest of them. What gracious comforts also thou vouchsafed the penitent thief in the midst of thy own distress.

"O how great was the inexpressible anguish of our Saviour's soul in beholding the wrath of his Father so hotly flaming against us for those sins of ours, which he did "bear in his own body on the tree;" and that, too, under so great weakness of body, that both made him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" He gave up the ghost, when he might have brought down himself from the cross, and no man could take away his life from him, that the work of our redemption might be finished by him. His blessed side was pierced with a spear, entering into his heart, and letting out the last remains of his blood, that he might give full proof to the world of his being truly dead. His soul was separated from the body, and passed into the state of the dead and of perfect sep-

aration, sanctifying that middle state to his servants for their souls to rest in till the resurrection.

"And by all these several sorts and degrees of thy suffering, by all this bitter pain, and sorrow, and shame, and agony, and anguish, which thou didst endure in thy body, and in thy soul, for miserable men, and for me a miserable sinner, I now entreat thee to have mercy upon me, and forgive me; to save me, and bless me.

"Since then, O my Saviour, thou commandest me to commemorate these thy sorrows, and to do this in remembrance of thee: I eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, in remembrance that I have wounded, and grieved, and bruised thee: in remembrance that I have made thee behold the wrath of thy Father, and separated thy precious blood from thy body. But at the same time, the thoughts of thy wonderful love, in the midst of thy pains and sorrows, must yield my soul unspeakable delight. Wherefore, while I am grieved with thy grief, I will feast myself in the pleasures and triumphs of thy love. I will partake of thy torments and also thy joys, which thy love did yield in the midst of thy agonies."*

Isa. liii. 5. "He was wounded for our transgressions."

O my Redeemer, kind, unspeakably kind, to poor sinners wert thou in all thy life, thy sufferings, and thy death. I would ever contemplate the mysteries of thy cross, as expiating my sins and displaying the wonders of divine love. O the love and the wisdom of God, "which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." They "denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them, and killed the Prince of life. In every wound would I see another token and proof of thy tenderness and grace. "Let thy wounds then prove the most powerful remedies to rid me of my corruption! When any impure thoughts rise in me, let thinking of thy wounds crush them; when sluggishness in religion assaults me, let thy wounds and the remembrance of them make me vigilant in thy service; and when in the holy sacrament I think of thy wounds let all my vain imaginations expire."

Let me then ever remember Christ. "He did not forget us. He thought of us in his own extremity. At his death he regarded us more than he did himself. He put up many a petition for us, but few for himself. In the garden, on the cross, and in the grave, his lost sheep were still in his mind. He thought of them both day and night." And from the height of his glory, amid the worship of the heavenly world, the Saviour still regards his people on earth. "Unworthy as they are, he loves them; mean as they are, he is not ashamed to wear their form, and call them brethren. He forgets the songs of angels to listen to their sighs and prayers. It is his delight to minister to their wants, to protect them in their dangers, and to comfort them in their sorrows."* O may I never forget his love!

John i. 29. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Contemplate, O my soul, thy Saviour as a lamb slain for thee. "Rightly is he called a lamb, whose innocence was spotless, and his meekness and patience invincible; and the Lamb of God for his superior excellence and dignity, and his being chosen to this office by the Father. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth:" neither guile nor complaint was found in him. Dost thou then profess thyself a follower of the Lamb, and glory in the title? Learn, then, of him to be harmless and blameless, meek and lowly in heart, alike averse from doing and deserving evil, and ready to suffer it.

"But how does the Lamb of God take away sin? By bearing it "in his own body on the tree; the chastisement of our peace was upon him." O heavy load, which sunk the Son of God in his human body to the grave: and had it lain unremoved, would have sunk the whole world in ruins! "Worthy is the Lamb

* Altered from a meditation of Bonnell's.

* See Bradley's Sermons.

that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing."*

Luke xxiii. 42. "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

O suffering Saviour! like the dying thief would I look to thee with this petition. Thou that saved him and declared to him, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," O do thou make me also an illustrious trophy of thy mighty grace. I would look to thy wounds for my pardon, to thy merits alone for my justification. I acknowledge, I feel that I deserve nothing; but Jesus, remember me, even me, amid the assembled millions who will stand before thee in judgment at the great day of account. And, O may I never forget thee; but, filled with a sense of thy love, spend my whole time and strength, and all I am, and all I have, for my Redeemer.

John vi, 56. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."

In such a passage, let me never rest in the outward emblem, but look through the figure to the truth, and by the sign realize the thing signified. Our Lord has assured me his words here are spirit and life. May I then have a spiritual appetite for this spiritual food! O may the Holy Spirit give me a just and lively sense of my guilt and misery, and of my great need of Christ, so that I may earnestly long for, and, as with a keen and discriminating appetite, hunger and thirst after his salvation. I would now by faith realize, and receive out of, that fulness which there is in him for our use. He took upon him my nature, and is touched with a feeling of my infirmities. He is my Shepherd, who laid down his life for me. He is my Priest, who made atonement for my sins, and intercedes in my behalf. He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God. He is my complete Saviour, delivering me from all my sins. He has wisdom, power, grace, and compassion, adapted to all my wants. His love passeth knowledge. He shed his blood for me, a miserable and perishing sinner, and that blood cleanses from all sins. He is the propitiation for our sin. I believe this from my very heart. I rely upon him as my only Saviour. I would now, through the bread and wine, view afresh the atoning death of my Lord. My eyes look unto thee, O gracious Redeemer. O my soul, and all that is within me, praise and magnify the Lord, who died, who rose again, who intercedes for thee, and who is now present in the assembly of his people. Thus let me abide in him, and he give me his Spirit, and dwell in my heart by faith; thus may I enjoy an increasing communion with him as my all-satisfying portion, my joy, and my strength; thus may my appetite for the world and its pleasures be taken away; and may I find Christ and his salvation to be meat indeed and drink indeed, to my needy soul.

Matt. xxvi, 26. "Take, eat; this is my body."

"O blessed tidings to the poor distressed soul, famished with feeding on husks and vanity. Behold, thou sayest, "take, eat," offering thyself unto me, and commanding me to feast on thine own flesh, on thy all-sufficient atonement, yea, on all thy merits and graces. Lord! thou tenderest most freely what I need infinitely, and that which I desire above all things. Adored be thy wonderful bounty, in compliance wherewith, (unworthy as I am,) I yet stretch out a trembling hand to take hold of Christ. O may I now receive Jesus as my Lord, believe on his name, and live upon his fulness."*

Luke xxiii, 31. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

O thou gracious Redeemer, the Prince of Peace; thou compassionate Saviour, the Lord of Glory; give me grace so that I may ever hereafter show myself loving and mild to all my enemies, pardon them from my heart, earnestly pray for them, and seek to do them good.

O Jesus! let me never harbour one rancorous, malicious, or unkind thought

* Grove.

* Comber.

in that heart, in which I trust thou, the loving Saviour, now dwellest by faith. But may I become more like thee, O Christ! in my spirit and behaviour towards all with whom I have to deal. Shalt thou freely forgive and wonderfully extenuate such aggravated injuries as were inflicted on thee; and shall not I freely forgive the infinitely smaller trespasses that may be committed against me? O let me have "the same mind that was in Christ."

MEDITATIONS ON THE FESTIVALS OF THE CHURCH.

Christmas-day.

Luke xxii, 19. "This is my body which is given for you."

And was the Son of God made in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that his sacred body might be given for me? O glorious ransom price for my recovery! Most complete must be that redemption for which so great a price was paid. Yes, Christ my Lord, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace, was born of a virgin, and took our nature upon him, that he might, by suffering for sin, satisfy the justice, and appease the righteous anger of a holy God! And to what a life was his holy child Jesus born! O Jesus, I would now recollect that thy body was given to weariness, labour, painfulness, and watchings oft. It was given to treatment most shameful and most tormenting; to spitting, smiting, and cruel mockings; to the lashes of the whip, to the thorns, the nails, the cross, the spear, death, and the grave. All this, and thy Father's sensible and felt desertion, was suffered for us men, and for our salvation. Thus my body was redeemed from the power of sin and Satan, and recovered to light, life, and joy. Precious Saviour! the gift of thy body procures for me pardon and peace. O then let me give my body and soul to thee; let them not any longer be yielded to the degrading service of sin, but become wholly thine. Expel every enemy of thine and of mine; and come blessed Redeemer, and dwell in my heart by faith every day. May love to thee fill and pervade my whole soul, and constrain me to live wholly to thee.

Easter-day.

1 Cor. xv, 20. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

While we specially at the Lord's Table, seem to sit at the foot of the cross, and commemorate our Saviour's death, we may still rejoice in the recollection that "Christ is indeed risen." If Christ were not raised, then, truly faith in him is vain, and we are yet in our sins. But never was a fact so fully proved and established as this fact was. Let me then now contemplate this great and all important fact. His resurrection is the foundation of my hope; it declares him to be the Son of God, and a Redeemer mighty to save: it shows that we are justified and secured from condemnation, and is the means of our spiritual life. O Lord my God, not only give me a firm and unshaken confidence in this great fact; but grant that I may remember it with unfeigned gratitude, and let me receive from my risen Saviour, all those blessings which he is exalted to bestow.

But especially would I derive comfort from looking at his resurrection, as a type and pledge of the believer's rising from the grave. As he rose, so shall we rise also. How cheering to the mind awakened to a sense of the nearness and magnitude of eternity, is the conviction that through Christ, death has now lost its sting, and the grave its victory. "Whosoever believeth in him shall never die." Death shall be but the gate of life, the beginning of endless joy.

Rom. iv, 25. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

"I will go to thy table with joy, and tell out thy works with gladness, O most mighty Saviour, who hast not only died for my sins, but risen again for my justification. Indeed, what comfort would

I have found in this memorial of thy death, if it had not been for thy resurrection. This Sacrament then would only have represented thy sufferings, and renewed my sorrow, to think that so excellent a person had failed of my deliverance; but now it is become a feast of joy, because it is an assurance of thy resurrection, as well as a commemoration of thy passion. Since thou livest, glorified Jesus, we live also. Thy resurrection gives life to our hopes, makes our sorrows light, our lives cheerful, and our death the gate of immortality. Our fears are dispelled, and our troubled hearts are quieted with this,—The Lord is risen; yea, "the Lord is risen indeed."*

ASCENSION-DAY.

Luke xxiv, 51. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven."

How full of love, even to the end, was our adorable Lord! The last words sounding in the ears of his disciples was a blessing. He ascended to heaven blessing them, and still is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. O ascended Saviour, may my heart rise whither thou art gone; and now Christ is gone to heaven, may my affections be set on things above. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." This is a blessed confidence that can support the soul in the severest trials. He makes himself known too "in the breaking of bread." I would not then only remember his death; but, looking at his ascension, see the power given to him, mark the gifts which he has received, dwell upon the work which he is now carrying on, and daily come to him, and hold communion with him.

Remember, too, O my soul, "this same Jesus which was thus taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as he was seen going into heaven." Now at his table, I profess my expectation of his coming again. O may I be always ready for that day. The Lord in mercy grant that this sacred institution may raise my heart to my ascended Saviour, and lead me to look, and diligently prepare, for his second coming.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

Acts xix, 2. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?

Where true faith is, there are also the gracious influences of the Spirit; O may I so believe as to receive the Holy Spirit, which is the seal of God, (Eph. i, 13,) showing who are his redeemed people. Give unto me all the evidences which distinguish those who have received this gift. *They are born of the Spirit.* O Lord, produce in me the new heart and the new spirit, the daily turning from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, and from the world to God my Saviour. *They have the spirit of prayer.* O raise my heart constantly to thee in holy aspirations through the day, and give me real desires after thee in public, family, and social worship, so that I may never be content with a formal round of duties. *They mortify the deeds of the body.* The Lord grant that I too may strive against every temptation, resist sin, and never yield to carnal indulgences. *They bring forth the fruits of righteousness.* O that I may manifestly bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, long-suffering, faith, and temperance.

O Lord, my Heavenly Father, I would feel and acknowledge that though, through thy great mercy, I am not, I trust, wholly barren of spiritual fruit, yet there is little indeed brought forth that may glorify God, and adorn the doctrine of my Saviour. O thou who hearest prayer, and givest good things to them that ask, give me that best gift—thy Holy Spirit.

"Behold thy Spirit hath converted and sanctified millions; let me therefore, together with thy whole Church, receive here such proportions of thy Holy Spirit, as may suppress my evil affections, revive my dead heart, comfort my dejected mind, and turn my ignorance, disobedience, and sorrow, into knowledge, and practice, and holy joy. Let the Spirit rest upon me, and dwell in me for ever,

* Comber.

so that I may always have cause to bless thee for so incomparable a gift."

TRINITY-SUNDAY.

Ephes. ii, 18. "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Jesus, our Lord, having reconciled us to God by the cross, may I practically know what it is to have access unto him, through Christ by the Spirit. I desire to know the great and glorious doctrine of this day, not as a matter of theory, or belief merely, but as a thing of experience, and daily practice. Deliver me from a proud and presumptuous spirit, that would cavil at thy truth. Deliver me from a too curious and prying spirit, that would attempt to comprehend that which it has not pleased thee to reveal. Give me grace in all simplicity of heart, to receive what thou hast declared, and, feeling my own ignorance and nothingness, to adore thee in thy incomprehensible Majesty, and unsearchable Glory.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, I come to thee as one that spared not thy beloved Son for us, and art now reconciled by him; and I beseech thee, receive, provide for, and bless me.

Blessed Redeemer, thou art the way, the truth, and the life, my mediator and my advocate, my hope is in thy merits and thy intercession.

Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who showest the Saviour to sinners, I look to thee to teach and guide, to purify, strengthen, and console me.

Prayer after receiving the Lord's Supper.

Thanks be unto thee, Holy Father, Lord God Almighty; thanks be unto thee for the privilege which thou hast given me of uniting with thy people to commemorate the sacrifice of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for all the edification and comfort thus given to me.

O that this solemnity may so deeply and so permanently affect my heart, as constantly to influence my future life. Let the love of Christ now at length constrain me no longer to live to myself, but to him who died for me.

Pardon all in this service that was not right before thee. All I do is defiled with sin; but I offer every service unto thee in the name of Jesus alone. I bless thee, through him, for whatever thy Spirit enabled me to do in any measure agreeably to thy holy will. But my whole hope and trust is in the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, which I have now been commemorating, to atone not only for former transgressions, but for all the failings and defects of my preparation, and performances even at this solemn feast. Lord, spare me, and accept me on account of that great propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

O that I may ever remember that the vows of the Lord are upon me, and that I am thine, irrevocably thine; and may I walk from day to day as becomes a child of God and an heir of his glory. Keep alive in my mind a constant sense of my weakness, and my entire dependence on thy grace. May I now go forth to my duties more humbled and more devoted, more watchful against my spiritual enemies, and more determined to give up all for him who gave up his life for me.

Give unto me, I pray thee, this comfortable evidence of having had communion with Christ; that my faith in him for supplies in all my way to heaven is manifestly strengthened; that I have the same mind that was in him; have become like him; am copying his example, and treading in his steps. May I watch over my motives as well as my conduct, and do thou deliver me from improper motives, in doing outwardly good works. May I also find in my growing experience more proofs of my being a member of the mystical body of Christ, in that my love to those that belong to him increases, and I can make larger allowances for their infirmities, and more readily do them self-denying services. Nor let my love stop short of the divine pattern of him who loved his worst enemies.

O Lord, I would now, in the fulness

of my heart, earnestly pray for the coming of that time when all that bear the name of Christ shall fulfill his dying precept, and thy table be crowded with believing and joyful guests. O when shall all the ends of the earth look to Jesus and be saved! Hasten it in thy good pleasure, O Lord; that Christ Jesus may be known, loved, and obeyed in every land, and the Lord's name be praised from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Thus glorify thy great name, fulfill thy gracious promises, and let thy kingdom be fully established, through Jesus Christ our only Redeemer. —Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT.

CHAPTER I.

The Usefulness of Theological Study to Christians.

The Christian is placed by his heavenly Father in this world, as in a school to prepare him for his future and everlasting life. Every thing which he sees around him, and which he passes through, all the works of creation, and all the wonders of providence, daily bring before him lessons in that pure and heavenly wisdom which he has to acquire to make him meet for that inheritance, which fadeth not away.

The Christian student is one who is constantly receiving instruction, and gaining knowledge to fit him for serving God on earth, and for the higher and more blessed service in which he hopes to spend a happy eternity.

The design of this work chiefly is to set before him the best method of pursuing theological studies: that is, the study of human writings on religion, in connexion with a supreme regard to the word of God, in order that he may become "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." The wish of the author is so to assist him that he may, if a private Christian, be enabled "always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear;" and, if purposing to fulfill the more arduous office of a Christian minister, he may be directed to those studies which may better fit him for being "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

A Christian divine, in the true sense of the words, is the highest and most blessed character on earth. Witsius happily describes it: "By a divine I understand one who, imbued with the solid knowledge of God and divine things, God Himself being the Teacher, not by words only but by the whole course of his life, sets forth and celebrates the admirable virtues of God, and so is wholly devoted to His glory. Such were in former days the holy patriarchs, such the divinely inspired prophets, such the apostolic teachers of the whole world, such some of those whom we call Fathers, widely shining lights of the primitive Church."*

To attain this character, study is, among other things, indispensably requisite. When divine revelation was first committed to writing, it became a duty, a privilege, and a blessing, to read that writing. Respecting this duty there will, among Christians, be little difference of opinion.

The advantages of a written statement of opinions being perceived, books multiplied, even before the coming of Christ, to a vast extent. Hence in the days of Solomon, it was asserted, "of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh." The Alexandrine library, burnt about fifty years before Christ, is said to have contained 400,000 manuscript volumes. The invention of printing immensely increased the number of copies of books, and the facilities of access to them.

There are doubtless evils inseparable from these advantages. Where books

* See his Oration on the True Theologian, in the 2d volume of his Miscellanea Sacra, 553.

have an improper or evil tendency, the harm done becomes far more extensive; and the very multitude of books adds to the difficulty of choice and selection, and disposes the supine and indolent to sit down in contented ignorance. Pride and vanity are also fostered by mere literary acquisition; and the posession of religious knowledge may be fatally but easily mistaken for the possession of real religion.

It is perfectly true, that not merely human learning, but scriptural knowledge in its highest degree, (*prophecy* and understanding *all mysteries* and *all knowledge*,) may be vain and unprofitable. A church may be "enriched with all knowledge, and come behind in no gift," and yet be "carnal and walk according to man." 1 Cor. iii, 3.

There are also sorrows in knowledge from which the ignorant are free: we discover many evils which we could not before discern: we perceive an unexpected darkness where we thought all was light; we sometimes ourselves mistake error for truth; and doubts are excited where none existed before.

But still, whatever sorrows attend wisdom, "it excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness;" much of this sorrow is real gain in the result; to be exempt from it through ignorance is no real advantage. It is better to know that evil which we may correct, than to slumber on in ignorance till all be lost. After making every abatement, real religion has all along been vastly advanced by means of learning.

It is of *written books* that David gives those high commendations. "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." It is of written books that our Saviour says, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." And the apostle declares that they "are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ."

These things are spoken of inspired books. But we have no reason to think that the apostle, when he told Timothy to "give attendance to reading," wished him to confine his attention to the records of inspiration only; especially since he himself quoted heathen writers, (as Aratus, a Greek poet, Acts xvii, 28; and Epimenides, a Cretan, Titus i, 12,) in order to illustrate the truths which he wished to impress.

The Scriptures speak much in favour of knowledge in general. Thus it is said, "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." Prov. xix, 2. "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge." Prov. xviii, 15. "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge." Prov. xxii, 17. "The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge." Prov. xv, 14. "The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it." Eccles. vii, 12. These passages apply, in the highest sense, to scriptural and divine knowledge, but comprehend knowledge in general, and especially whatever facilitates the acquisition of that which is divine and scriptural.

The Holy Scriptures state in strong terms the danger of wanting knowledge, both as it respects ministers and people. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me. Hosea iv, 6. Isaiah speaks in a similar way of the evils of having no knowledge. Isaiah v. 13.

The apostle Paul, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, has placed this subject in a clear light. He commences the twelfth chapter with stating that he "would not have them ignorant, concerning spiritual gifts." He then shows the nature of those gifts, some of which were miraculous, and peculiar to that age, and other needful in all ages. He tells them to "covet earnestly the best gifts;" and in the thirteenth chapter, shows the superior excellence of charity, but not to the disparagement of other gifts; for in the fourteenth, he charges them to "desire spiritual gifts," and in verse 12 bids

them "seek to excel to the edifying of the church." Great then as is the value, and supreme as is the importance of the graces of the Christian, they must not exclude a holy diligence to acquire those gifts of "the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues," which are profitable to our own edification, and to the edification of the church.

God has manifestly owned and prospered human writings on religion. It is fully admitted that there are many devout, holy, heavenly-minded Christians who are thoroughly versed in the Scriptures, but have little or none of what is reckoned human learning: real piety may consist with considerable deficiencies in learning. And again a man may have an extensive knowledge of languages, he may know the whole theory of religion and be able to defend it most ably and skilfully against its most subtle opponents; he may have the intellectual powers and stores of a Warburton or a Horsley, and yet not have that experience of the truth in its sanctifying influence on his own heart, which manifests itself in meekness, humility, forbearance, brotherly-kindness, devotion, and the whole spirit of the Christian. Dr. Buchanan justly observes that "we must not confound two terms, a Theologian and a Christian. That which constitutes a Christian is 'faith, hope, and charity, these three.' Much human learning is not essentially necessary to constitute a Christian. Indeed a man may be a profound Theologian, and not be a Christian at all. He may be learned in the doctrines and history of Christianity, and yet be a stranger to the fruits of Christianity: He may be destitute of faith, of hope, and charity."

Yet we must not from the abuse of a thing despise it altogether. If we look at the general state of the church, how few eminent Christians are there who have not been greatly indebted to religious books, either for their first impressions, or for much of that knowledge by which they have acquired enlarged and correct views of divine truth, and pursued a wise and holy conduct; how few have been extensively useful to others who have not themselves been benefitted by study! Many of those Christians, who are now nourished by the Scriptures only, received their first religious impressions through human books. Hardly any Christians are there who have not in one way or other received much advantage from them. It has,unquestionably,pleased God to carry on His own kingdom, and promote the spiritual welfare of His people by means of human writings. Undoubtedly, in those of His servants, there has been the manifestation of the Spirit given to every man to profit withal. Nor need we suppose that so many holy and wise indivlduals, who have communicated their thoughts to the world, after long, and deep, and devotional study of the sacred writings, have thus laboured in vain. A person who has travelled, with an observing mind, over every part of a country, has acquired thereby, in all ordinary cases, experience to guide others. The fruit of such toil will only be despised by those who are ignorant of its real value. The Holy Spirit has manifestly, in different degrees, and in varied gifts, helped the servants of God, so that we have a vast accumulation of valuable knowledge in their compositions, and God is continually using them for good.

Again, *learning is needful for the due understanding the Bible.* If reading the sacred volume be important, we must of necessity admit the usefulness of a variety of other studies. The Bible itself could not have been presented to any nation now existinig, in its vernacular language, without the aid of considerable human learning. The Bible is, in its first parts, the most ancient of all books; it was delivered in languages that are now dead, in a foreign land, and abounding with allusions to ancient manners and customs. Though the knowledge of these things may be of little comparative importance to a poor man, only anxious to know its saving truths for his own eternal welfare, it is of great moment to those who have to preach, and explain, and defend the sacred contents of this blessed volume. Hence it becomes important to acquaint ourselves with the

Hebrew and Greek languages, the early versions of the Scriptures, the manners and antiquities of the Jews, and other things of a like kind, in order that we may know what is the full import and meaning of the original record of the divine will.

The Bible also contains predictions relating to all nations that have any connexion with the Church of God, and ultimately affecting mankind at large. We shall lose one of the most striking and satisfactory evidences for the authority and truth of the Bible, as the word of God, if we disregard the history of nations, which is in fact the developement of the prophecies of that book.

Learning is also *needful for knowing the works of God.* The volume of nature, is as much of divine workmanship as that of grace, and displays the same divine wisdom, power, and love. But an extensive knowledge of what God has created for his glory and for our instruction, can in general only be attained by human writings. Bishop Reynolds remarks, "All secular learning is the knowledge of God's works: philosophical and mathematical learning, the knowledge of his works of creation: historical and political learning, the knowledge of his works of providence: moral, and economical, and civil learning, the knowledge of those remainders of his image and law which are left in the minds of men for their direction and conviction: grammatical, rhetorical, and logical learning, the knowledge of the use of that reason which God gives us for imparting our minds and evidencing our conceptions unto one another. So then all true learning being a knowledge of the works of God, must needs be honorable and excellent."

The *evidence of experience*, in the History of the Church, is *decidedly in favour of learning*. Allowing that talents of the highest order may be joined with depravity of the deepest dye—as is eminently the case in the chief agent of evil, Satan—it must be asserted, that the highest created character is like that of the blessed angels where piety and knowledge are combined in the greatest degree.

If we look at the history of the church, the brightest examples of ardent and useful piety have been found in men of great knowledge. The most honoured instruments in founding and carrying forward both the Jewish and Christian churches, were men eminent in learning as well as in piety. Moses, the lawgiver and leader of the Jews, was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel.

Much has been said of the ignorance of the first teachers of Christianity; but those who dwell on their humble birth and situation, and their few acquirements, forget their extraordinary gifts and endowments. Bishop Horsley, speaking, not of the sanctifying influence, but of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, says, "Learning is to us the best substitute for that preternatural illumination of the understanding which was the privilege of the first preachers. They were qualified without any previous study, for the office to which they were called, because they had that other source of fuller and more certain information.—The knowledge which the Holy Spirit conveyed to the understanding of these chosen instruments of God, was the very same in kind, consisting of the same particulars, which in the ordinary way is attained in a more imperfect degree by study.

The force, therefore, of the objection, that the first Christians were illiterate, is taken away by the fact, that they were supernaturally assisted with all the learning which was requisite for their office. Œcolampadius justly observes to the Waldenses, "We are not to tempt God, as if He were to be expected to instruct us as he did the apostles, miraculously, without study on our part." Indeed, we cannot have the local information which they had without much learning. Besides, while the great apostle of the Gentiles was not destitute, as we have seen, of human learning naturally acquired; he both made use of that learning in defence of the gospel, and disputed with the learned Athenians on their own principles.

It is a very erroneous idea, that knowledge is prejudicial to faith. Religion is

not the privilege of the ignorant. In fact, the worst enemies of Christianity have endeavored to keep Christians in ignorance. We see this both in Paganism and Popery. The ages of ignorance were the ages when Popery was dominant: and in the time of Paganism, the emperor Julian, one of the most artful and bitter opponents which the Christian religion perhaps ever had, well aware of the powerful use which Christians had made of learning, refused permission to them to study the classics.*

The most useful laborers in the church of Christ have been men of learning. Not to mention many of the Fathers, how much do we owe to to the learning of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Ridley, Cranmer, Jewell, Usher, Hall, Leighton, and multitudes of others.

The revival of literature, and the reformation of the church, were connected events. The Reformers felt strongly the importance of learning; Luther says, "I am persuaded that true divinity could not well be supported without the knowledge of letters: of this we have sad proof; for while learning was decayed and in ruins, theology fell too, and lay most wretchedly obscured. I am sure that the revelation and manifestation of the word of God would never have been so extensive and glorious as it is, if preparatorily, like so many John the Baptists smoothing the way, the knowledge of the languages and good learning had not risen up amongst us. They are most exceedingly mistaken, who imagine that the knowledge of nature and true philosophy is of no use to a divine." He says, in the Preface to an exposition of the 90th Psalm, "There were at that time men, and more afterwards, would arise, who despised theological studies, and indeed *all* studies; there ought therefore to be some to proclaim the praises of God, and to disseminate the knowledge of His word."

Religious knowledge is profitable for all classes. Laymen, and all Christians, are personally concerned in this subject. Men are too apt to think that the study of religion concerns ministers and not private Christians. Divinity, however, is not like medicine, or law, or navigation, which belong only to a particular class or profession; every human being has an immortal soul, the care of which devolves mainly on himself. Every human being is dependent on God and Jesus Christ, and is infinitely concerned to know His character and will. All Christians are called μαθηται, disciples, or scholars. Their very name implies that they are learners.

The extensive usefulness of such laymen as Bacon, Boyle, Hale, Pascal, Boerhaave, Haller, Johnson, Beattie, Goode, and others, was closely connected with their general and religious knowledge and learning. Laymen are free from the suspicion of professional interest, and can therefore speak on religion with some advantages which a minister does not possess. The apostle in the direction, "leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection," requires Christians in general not to be content with a slight superficial knowledge; and supposes that after a certain time all ought to be able to instruct others: "for the time ye ought to be teachers". This direction is not immediately addressed to ministers, but to Christians in general.

It is affecting sometimes to hear laymen deliberately avow their ignorance of religion, either as what does not concern them, or as an evidence of their superiority to vulgar prejudice. What a low, dark, and miserable mind must theirs be! To be willingly and ostentatiously ignorant of that, which on the very face of it is the sublimest and most ennobling of all studies, relating to the great Lord of all, to both worlds and all ages; and affecting the character, the conduct, and the present, the mental, the temporal, and the eternal happiness of the whole human race! surely this very avowal can only be accounted for on the Scriptural

* "With a view to keep the church in ignorance of the arts of reasoning and philosophy, he forbade Christian schoolmasters to teach Gentile learning, lest being furnished, says, he, with our armour, they make war upon us with our own weapons. Our learning is unnecessary to Christians who are trained up to an illiterate rusticity, so that to believe is sufficient for them, and by this prohibition I only restore possessions to their proper owners."

principle "of having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them."

It is the testimony of Boyle, one well qualified to say so, "For an ordinary naturalist to despise those that study the mysteries of religion, as much inferior to physical truths, is no less unreasonable than it were for a watch-maker because he understands his own trade, to despise privy counsellors, who are acquainted with the secrets of monarchs and mysteries of state; or than it were for a ship carpenter, because he understands more of the fabric of a vessel, to despise the admiral that is acquainted with the secret designs of the prince, and employed about the most important affairs."*

In what respect is theology not adapted to the body of Christians? It is a science concerning the noblest subjects on which the mind of man can be occupied, it improves the student in piety, consoles him in affliction, and prepares him for the everlasting enjoyment of the Divine Object of his studies.

If it be thought a great thing to keep a man from the grave, sometimes for a few days, and still more to restore him to health, so that he may enjoy life for some years, even though with troublesome diet and remedies, theology has yet higher and better ends. It shows the way of attaining spiritual health, endless life, and perfect happiness.

Laymen will be preserved from many temptations, by adequate Christian knowledge. If you know the scriptures and the history of the church, you will not be so apt to be misled by every fresh error, nor, as St. James expresses it, to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine."

The *circumstances of the times show the importance of study.* We live in a reading age, when education is almost universal, and men think and speak on all subjects with the utmost freedom. All classes of people read much, and religious persons must not be behind them, especially in that knowledge which directly affects religion. And though the end of our studies is not to exalt ourselves above others, yet *our profiting* in our studies, as in other things, ought to *appear to all men.*

The various sentiments and doctrines which have arisen since the apostolic age, and are now abroad among men; and the history of the church, since that time require knowledge and learning, if men would themselves discern what is truth, or be useful to those around them. A religious man, without any knowledge of history, or general information, or any comprehensive view even of the various parts of his religion, will speak with immense disadvantage, if called into discussion with well-informed persons of the world, who may have a greater speculative knowledge of religion. He may thus, to his great grief, be an occasion of offence to others; and religion, which is dearer to him than life itself, may materially suffer from that incapacity and ignorance from which diligence in study would have saved him. Dr. Buchanan, after showing that God honors human acquirements, when used in subordination to His grace, says, "Let us then honor human learning. Every branch of knowledge which a good man possesses, he may apply to some good purpose. If he possessed the knowledge of an archangel, he might apply it all to the advantage of men and the glory of God."

Many objections have been made against the usefulness of learning.—It is objected, that learned men are sometimes infidels, and often merely nominal Christians; and the Apostle himself says, "not many wise men after the flesh" are called. This indeed is an important and humbling lesson to those who trust in human wisdom, which can never of itself attain divine grace, and often hinders and hurts the soul. It has pleased God to make manifest the inefficiency of human acquirements of themselves, that He might the more display the necessity and excellence of His own grace; but in every age there have been those who have been bright examples that piety and great attainments in learning are perfectly consistent. It was an old reproach against an Apostle, "much learning doth make

* Excellency of Theology, p. 170.

thee mad;" Paul, though learned, was not mad.* Men of both learning and piety are requisite to convict the errors of ignorant pious men on the one hand, and to answer the errors of learned wicked men on the other. There are those who turn knowledge, and argument, and human wisdom against religion, but there are assuredly infinitely superior knowledge, superior argument, and superior wisdom, *on the side of religion*, and this has been and will be manifested to the unspeakable advantage of truth. Religion receives its due homage when the highest intellect and deepest learning, when Bacon and Newton yield subjection to it.

If there are learned men to oppose the Gospel, there ought to be still more learned men to meet such opponents, and to show that the very depths of learning contain nothing but invincible arguments for the truth of the Gospel, and all its great and cheering doctrines.† And after all, though learning has been possessed by the wicked, the learning of ungodly men has not been the cause of their wickedness, but merely the occasion of manifesting it. Nay their learning has been of use to others. The Scribes among the Jews preserved the Scriptures, and the learning of worldly men, whether physicians, lawyers, and historians, or even divines, has yet often been beneficial to their country, and made subservient to religion. God thus continues to spoil the Egyptians, and make their jewels and their treasures presents and gifs to His Church.

If pious persons are prejudiced against learning, from seeing the way in which learned men have perverted the Gospel, they should also consider that want of literature is no security for a pure Gospel. Men of boldness, talent, and fluency, who may be very illiterate, will press forward, pretend to extraordinary light, and draw multitudes after them, when it is nothing more than "speaking great swelling words of vanity," and thus "allure through the lusts of the flesh those that for a while were escaped from them who live in error." 2 Pet. ii, 18.

Duly to comprehend Christianity, will call for the highest and most cultivated powers of the human mind: and, in this view, vast is the importance of education, and habits of study and reflection, to a right reception of religious truth. "Consider," says Mr. Foster, "what a fatal inaptitude for receiving the truths of religion is created by the neglect of training minds to the exercise of their faculties, and the acquirement of elementary information." After then showing what are the sublime, and holy, and spiritual doctrines of Christianity, he states the difficulty of "beings who never learned to think at all, who have hardly ever once in their whole lives made a real effort to direct and concentrate the actions of their faculties on any thing abstracted from the objects palpable to the senses," learning religion.

If you say that there are many different opinions among the learned, it is true;

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* Lord Bacon, answering the objection of *divines*, against learning, says, "It is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy may incline the mind to atheism, but a farther proceeding therein brings the mind back again to religion; for in the entrance of philosophy, when the second causes which are next unto the senses offer themselves to the mind of man, if it dwell and stay there, it may induce some oblivion of the highest cause; but when a man passes on farther, and sees the dependance of causes on the work of Providence; then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe that the highest link of nature's chain must be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair. To conclude, therefore, let no man, on a weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works—divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavor an endless progress or proficiency in both; only let men beware that they apply both to charity and not to swelling; to use and not to ostentation; and again, that they do not unwisely mingle or confound these learnings together."

† It is not learning but want of learning which leads to error in religion. It was the want of learning which occasioned the abuses of religion in the middle ages; it was the learning of our early reformers by which those abuses were corrected; let no one therefore apprehend that theological learning will now undo what it did at the reformation. It is in fact the only method of ensuring to us the advantage of the reformation, by guarding against enthusiasm on the one hand, and infidelity on the other.—*Bishop Marsh's Lectures.*—Pp. 12, 15, 16.

but there is among all real Christians an ample temple of divine truth, which is open and common to all; and the very differences should only lead you to a more close adherence to the divine record yourself, and a large spirit of charity to differing brethren.

If you object that there are so many mysteries (which seems rather multiplied than diminished by learned men) burdening religion,—Boyle well replies, "if they must be called burdens, they are such burdens as are feathers to a hawk, which instead of hindering his flight by their weight, enable him to soar toward heaven, and take a larger prospect of things than if he had not feathers he could possibly do."

Besides, *learning furnishes us with much real enjoyment.* Surely it is one of our greatest privileges, that living so many hundred years from the mighty dead, we can by means of their writings converse with them more intimately, than if they now lived in our neighbourhood: that we have the full benefit of their best and choicest, their most mature and deliberate thoughts, in the clearest method, on the most important of all subjects; and that all ages are thus made present to our minds, render to us instructive information, and edify and comfort us.

The advantages of books, and of a well furnished study, are thus set forth by Bishop Hall. "The thoughts of our deliberations are most accurate: these we vent into our papers. What a happiness is it that without all offence of necromancy, I may here call up any of the ancient worthies of learning, whether human or divine, and confer with them of all my doubts! and I can at pleasure summon whole synods of reverend fathers and acute doctors from all the coasts of the earth, to give their well studied judgments in all points of question which I propose. Neither can I cast my eye casually upon any of these silent masters, but I must learn somewhat. It is a wantonness to complain of choice. No law binds us to read all: but the more we can take in and digest, the better-liking must the mind needs be. Blessed be God that hath set up so many clear lamps in his church: now none but the wilfully blind can plead darkness. And blessed be the memory of these his faithful servants, that have left their blood, their spirits, their lives, in these precious papers, and have willingly wasted themselves into these during monuments to give light to others."—Hall's Works, vol. vi. p. 166.

Mr. Montgomery has some striking remarks on the advantages to be derived from the talents of others. He says—"It is the prerogative of genius to confer a measure of itself on inferior intelligences. In reading the works of Milton, Bacon, and Newton, thoughts greater than the growth of our own minds are transplanted into them, and feelings more profound, sublime, or comprehensive, are insinuated amidst our ordinary train; while in the eloquence with which they are clothed, we learn a new language worthy of the new ideas that are created in us. Of how much pure and exalted enjoyment is he ignorant, who never entertained, as angels, the bright and loftier emanations of loftier intellects than his own! By habitual communion with superior spirits, we not only are enabled to think their thoughts, speak their dialects, feel their emotions, but our own thoughts are refined, our scanty language is enriched, our common feelings are elevated: and though we never attain their standard, yet by keeping company with them, we shall rise above our own, as trees growing in the society of a forest are said to draw each other up into shapely and stately proportion, while field and hedge-row stragglers, exposed to all weathers, never reach their full stature, luxuriance and beauty."

It is not every reader that derives all these advantages from the thoughts of others: much depends on the character of the student, and of his studies; we have here however brought before us a very valuable statement of the advantages which may be derived from the superior mind and talents of others.

If we would not be confined and cramped by the views of the place, and the age, and the circumstances in which we live, and the party with which we associate, and would rise to the ground

of higher usefulness and more extended blessing, we must read works of other countries and other ages and other classes of men, and take from an elevated position an enlarged view of the minds of men, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

Theology is, like the heavens, full of stars which appear not to a careless spectator; but a diligent contemplator, with suitable helps, will find new worlds of glory in every part. The ministers of Christ, especially, should be continually growing in religious acquirements, and adding to that ministerial furniture of mind which will enable them to bring out of their treasury things new and old. It will both take them out of scenes of trial and temptation in the world, and also fit them for honourable and useful services in the Church.

Yet to the due exaltation of Divine grace, and the depression of human pride, it is in conclusion strenuously maintained that God has greatly blessed and honoured men, like Bunyan, not without knowledge, but without learning; and has left learned men, and especially those whose hearts are not devoted to their Heavenly Master, barren and unfruitful.

Speaking of the philosophical sciences, Augustine thus excellently distinguishes between the illiterate Christian and the speculative philosopher. "Unhappy is that man who knows all these things and knows not thee; but blessed is he who knows thee, though he knows not these things. But he who knows both thee and them is not happier on their account, but on account of thee alone is happy, if knowing thee he glorify thee as God, and be thankful, and be not vain in his imaginations. For as he is in a better situation, who possesses a tree, and is thankful to thee for the use of it, though he knows neither its height, nor breadth, than he who measures it, and counts all its branches, and neither possesses it, nor knows nor has learned his Creator, so the believer, whose property all the riches of the world are, and who having nothing, yet possesses all things, by cleaving to thee whom all things serve, is indisputably better than the most knowing natural philosopher upon earth, who lives in the neglect of thee."

CHAPTER II.

The Influence of Practical Holiness on Theological Studies.

Holy tempers, and a holy conduct, are essential to our attaining the wise and great end, the happy experience, and the true enjoyment of divine knowledge. No natural talents, nor any acquired learning can supply the place of Christian graces, or be a substitute for them. As the first sin was preferring knowledge to obedience, and the effect was a darkened understanding and a sinful and miserable life, so it is now. Sin produces ignorance as well as misery. The consideration of this subject is seasonable and important, as many have asserted, that man is not accountable for his belief; but the Bible shows us that the origin of infidelity is the wickedness of the heart, John iii, 18, 19. Our moral character has an immense influence on our opinions.

A humble Christian, who desires to please God above all things, and who seeks, by a diligent and devout study of his word to know his will, in order that he may do that will, has in these holy dispositions the very elements of the highest wisdom and usefulness, and, as these dispositions are maintained and increased, he will find them continually to assist and correct his views, and make all his acquirements really valuable, profitable, and sanctifying. However a man may have attained a clear systematic divinity; yet, if he be seriously defective in Christian graces, he will, in proportion to the extent of that defect, not know divine truth in its use and enjoyments; and his knowledge will be imperfect. In some cases he will turn aside to vain speculations which have a show of wisdom, and as he thinks, promote his own importance or even usefulness; but the result will be unprofitable to himself and others: and in other cases, like Solomon of old, and Lord

Bacon in later times, he will be very wise for others, and yet very foolish for himself.

There is, indeed, an extended connexion in all parts of the divine system, and especially in each branch of divine truth. It resembles a rich and magnificent chain of gold, in which not only each separate link is exquisitely finished and wrought, but it is united to similar links, and thus is made subservient to farther ends, as were the chains of gold on the neck of Aaron, supporting on his breast that breast-plate, in which were the Urim and Thummim, the lights and perfections of the church.

There is also a beautiful re-action arising from our own conduct. One thing affects another, and the impression made returns again, so that there is a reciprocal and endless progression of good or evil, according to the conduct of the moral agent. This makes sin a tremendous evil; this makes holiness infinitely desirable; for the influence of either will never be exhausted, but will affect immortal beings through eternal ages. Nor is there any remedy for the evil of sin, but in that great salvation, which stops the contagion, and imparts the counteracting and healthful spirit of divine grace.

This moral reaction is always at work, and in seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we are most effectually securing every other good. As Solomon, by seeking wisdom rather than riches, gained both; so by that which is "the beginning of wisdom," even "by humility and the fear of the Lord, are riches, and honour, and life."

It is a remarkable part of the Divine wisdom, that revealed truth is not given to us in an accurately arranged system, or in an orderly and minute statement of its different ramifications in one lengthened discussion, but in history, and in promises, and precepts given as occasion arose from time to time; the aim of all which is to promote practical holiness, in attaining which we fail not to obtain saving truth, and without which we cannot know God; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." God is to be known by the life and experience of the Christian, rather than by bare study. "O taste and see how good the Lord is!"

All sin has a blinding influence upon the human mind.. When men's deeds are evil, it causes them to love darkness rather than light. It hinders the just perception of spiritual things. "None of the wicked shall understand." The too eager pursuit of even *lawful* occupations engages and distracts the mind of the worldly man, and leaves him no time for the calm, patient, and steady application of his mind to the discovery of divine truth. If he asks, "what is truth," even from the first source of truth, he has no patience to wait for the answer. To such a one, invisible things appear distant and uncertain, and if of a superior nature, yet so remote as rather to be admired, than desired or pursued. The gratification of the lusts of their own hearts led the heathen to change "the truth of God into a lie." Rom. i, 25, 26. The indulgence of unholy tempers and affections, such as pride, envy, malice, impurity, ambition, gives a real distaste to the opposing truths of Christianity. And when these sins break out in the life, and lust has conceived and brought forth sin, then, even if truth had been previously acquired, it is held or confined and detained in unrighteousness. Rom. i, 18. "When they knew God and glorified him not as God, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, and one sin led on to another, till they sunk into the very depths of idolatry.

Archbishop Usher says, "All sins are in the Epistle to the Hebrews termed ignorances (Heb. ix, 7, compared with Lev. xvi, 16, 17,) and sinners ignorant and erring persons (Heb. v, 2;) because, however, in the general the understanding may be informed rightly, yet when particular actions come to be resolved upon, men's perverse wills and inordinate affections cloud their minds and lead them out of the way. That, therefore is to be accounted sound knowledge which sinks from the brain into the heart, and from thence breaks forth into action (setting head, heart, hand, and all a-work,) and so much only must thou reckon thyself to know Christianity, as thou art able to

make use of in practice." He quotes James ii, 18; iii, 13, and 1 John ii, 3, 4, to illustrate this.*

Here, then, we see where the Christian will bend his main strength; he must not cultivate gifts, rather than graces; attainments in knowledge, rather than attainments in holiness; studies must not come before or displace prayer; conferences for acquiring knowledge, before conferences for acquiring spirituality of mind and Christian experience.

But let us endeavour to illustrate these general remarks, by a particular consideration of the influence of holiness on knowledge. These do indeed mutually influence and promote each other. "His divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." 2 Pet. i, 3. We cannot attain to holiness without a measure of knowledge, and every step in that attainment prepares for increasing knowledge. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." We cannot limit the mode in which the Holy Spirit either commences or carries on his work within us: as he divides "to every man severally as he will," so he works in various ways, and in such order as pleases him: sometimes by first convincing the intellect, sometimes by exciting the imagination, and sometimes by touching the affections; but the result is one, to be renewed after the divine image. There is a general tendency;—the tendency of all truth is to promote holiness—and of all error to famish the soul. The ways of false prophets are lascivious ways. 2 Pet. ii, 2. The tendency of all holiness is to enlighten the mind, and of all sin to darken and obscure the truth.

Holiness, the work of the Spirit in the heart of man, (1 Thes. ii, 13,) is a term of large meaning, implying in its full import, entire purity from all sin, and entire dedication to God, and conformity to his will. In a sinful creature like man, it can only be attained by faith in Christ, and through his Spirit, and it is continued by constant exercises of the same lively faith, and communications of the same Spirit. It has various parts and degrees, and its influence on knowledge may be seen in each of these.

Conversion to God (John iii, 3—5) is a first step in Christian holiness. It implies a total change in the inner man; a commencement of a new life; and our Lord declares, that without it a man "cannot see the kingdom of God." St. Paul also asserts, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual (ανακρινει) discerneth all things." Regeneration is then indispensably necessary for a full view and a true taste and relish of divine truth. As a blind man cannot discern or delight in colours, so an unregenerate is incompetent to discover and delight in the true glories of revelation. He wants that sense which would enable him rightly to discriminate truth from error, and greater truths from lesser truths. He has no spiritual taste or relish for evangelical verities. When regenerate by the Spirit, we shall spontaneously, as it were, distaste views, contrary to the mind of the Spirit—views which tend to exalt man, to degrade the Saviour, to lower the moral standard, or to make sin a slight evil; and though they are contrary to our fallen nature, we shall love and maintain the opposite scriptural truths. Let us then pray for the promised new heart and new spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. In the words of Bishop Taylor—"Without this new creation, this new principle of life, we may hear the word of God, but we can never understand it, we hear the sound but are never the better." Speaking afterwards of the different effects which truth produces, and asking the reason of the difference, he gives the following answer, "The one understands by nature, and the other by grace; the one by human learning, the other by divine; the one reads the Scriptures without, the other within; the one understands as a son of man, the other as a son of God; the one perceives by the proportion of the world, and the other by the measures of the Spirit; the

* See a Sermon appended to the 4th edition of his Answer to a Jesuit, p. 27.

one understands by reason, and the other by love; and therefore he does not only understand the sermons of the Spirit, and perceives their meaning, but he pierces deeper and knows the meaning of that meaning, that is the secret of the Spirit, that which is spiritually discerned, that which gives life to the proposition, and activity to the soul."

Communion with God is a most important means of divine knowledge. There is a higher study than that derived from acquaintance with human writings; there is a communion beyond that of communion with men; there is a daily and hourly converse with God, the Father of Lights, who is *Light* itself, and "in whom is no darkness at all; a philosopher may be ignorant of it, but the most learned, if pious, will esteem this to be his best source of highest knowledge, and it is one which the most illiterate Christian is privileged to enjoy. This high and holy study truly enlightens, it really ennobles, it invariably blesses the soul.* The believer, in the lively exercise of grace, thirsts after this supremely: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Christians in the full enjoyment of grace can say, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." This high and holy fellowship raises us above the fear of man, and leads us to search out for, and be content with, and rely upon the bare word of God, and to profess that word before the world. Had not Luther been a man of much communion with God, he would never have attained his eminent religious knowledge; or confessed it before men in that way which made him such an unequalled blessing in the Reformation.

Faith and love are eminent parts of Christian holiness. They are, when genuine, united together; St. James considers faith without love as a nonenity—a dead faith—a faith that cannot be shown. Now faith is the very organ and sense by which divine truth is received, and the main grace through which it is profitable. Heb. iv, 2. Love, again, is that state of mind which is most eminently adapted to a profitable study. The "deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" arises hence, "they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved." Love to God and his truth, will stir up the heart and quicken the soul to a holy diligence for further discoveries of both. The same graces will enable us to persevere in maintaining the truth according to the direction, "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. i, 13. Where there is the filial confidence and love of a child, its teachableness and tractableness, its ready reliance on its parents's word, and its affectionate heart toward that parent, then is there that state of mind which is best calculated most to advance us in the kingdom of heaven. Matt. xviii, 3, 4. Nathanael, the Israelite without guile, *believed* Christ on the first declaration of the Messiah, and on his manifesting this ready faith was assured, "thou shalt see greater things than these:" through love to Christ we obtain farther communications of divine knowledge: "he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him."

The tempers and disposition of the Christian in general have an important influence on his acquiring right views of divine truth. This might be shown at length in contrition, repentance, hope, humility, meekness, long-suffering, and the like. But let us mark it in that which is pre-eminently a Christian grace, humility. "With the lowly is wisdom." Prov. xi, 2. "He giveth grace unto the humble." James iv, 6. 1 Peter v. 5. "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the

* The remarks of Thomas a Kempis are appropriate and striking. "Let all teachers be silent, let the whole creation be dumb before thee, and do thou only speak to my soul—lest being only outwardly warned, but not inwardly quickened, I die and be found unfruitful; lest the word heard and not obeyed, known and not loved, professed and not kept, turn to my condemnation! Speak, therefore, Lord, for thy servant heareth: thou only hast the words of everlasting life! O speak to the comfort of my soul, to the renovation of my heavenly nature, and to the eternal praise and glory of thy own name!"

kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii, 4. "The meek will he guide in judgment." Psalm xxv, 9. The whole system of Christianity is of a humbling character. It places man in his true nothingness before God; (Gal vi, 3.) and pride is therefore the grand obstruction to a cordial reception of its pure and simple principles. Hence have arisen those self-righteous systems which have been invented to evade the gospel. But let a man be contrite, self-abased, and poor in spirit, and the main difficulties of receiving divine truth are removed. Salvation by free grace will be his only hope; giving all glory to God, and taking all shame to himself, will be easy to him; the aid of the Holy Spirit will be his highest consolation: every doctrine of Christianity is peculiarly adapted to the state of a humble and contrite spirit. O what a test and touchstone of character to the whole human race is the gospel of Jesus Christ! It discriminates and discloses, and developes every mind which it touches, and the proud in rejecting it are rejected, and the scorners in scorning it are scorned, (Prov. iii, 34.) and the meek are taught his way, and the humble in receiving it are exalted. If Moses was eminent for learning and wisdom; he was also the meekest of men. If Paul had the deepest insight into the mysteries of the gospel, his heart also burned with the most intense love to his Saviour. A serious, teachable, submissive, diligent, pure, candid, upright, and devout spirit, is the very temper of the Christian, and in that temper is the prepared ground in which the truths of religion readily grow and bring forth fruit. Matt. xiii, 23. Acts xvii, 11, 12.

Another part of holiness is *the fear of the Lord:* and very influential is this fear to the acquisition of knowledge: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Prov. i. 7. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom." Prov. xv, 33. This fear will be a guard against rashly adopting statements which have little or no foundation in his word, and will lead us to unfeigned submission to the plain statements of that word. It will keep us in that child-like and humble frame of mind which is peculiarly favorable to the ready reception of truth. Infidel writers have almost invariably manifested the want of this grace. A holy reverence, and a filial fear of God, and a dread of displeasing him, will also raise the soul above the fear of man, so that man's word will no longer be our ultimate guide, his threatenings our great terror, or his promises our highest hope. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." And as this fear is the commencement of knowledge, so it is (in the deliberate conviction to which the wisest mind after attaining all knowledge came) our highest good. Eccl. xii, 13. It is also the highest and best result of all acquirements. After Job had gone through the knowledge of natural things, he comes, under divine inspiration, to this conclusion, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Job xxviii, 28.

Simplicity of purpose to do the will of God is a leading characteristic of the holy man, and this is essential to the right perception of truth. The honest ground was the good ground, and the only ground which profitably received the seed of the word. Luke viii, 15. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If our great and leading aim be wrong; if to acquire the riches, honors, or pleasures of this life, be the chief objects which we have in view, it is like a disease or cataract in the eye, it darkens every part of spiritual truth. But if the heart be converted, and our supreme and leading objects be spiritual, and holy, and heavenly, we shall be prepared readily to admit those truths of which the Bible is so full respecting the vanity of earthly things; we shall acquiesce in, and receive those statements which are opposed to our worldly aggrandizement, and promote our higher and everlasting good. The wisdom of worldly men is in truth the greatest folly, and will be universally in the result acknowledged to be so, but while they hold it to be wisdom, all their judgment of things will be perverted. "When thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness." Sin, and all the lusts of the flesh, like a dense mist, obscure the

glory of truth. We all know how fogs and mists can veil the splendor of the sun, so that when they intervene, that glorious luminary has lost almost all its glory: the lesser light of the moon, in a clear atmosphere, has a greater brightness. Thus, when indulging in the lusts of the flesh, we are living in the low and damp ground of fogs and mists, and cannot see the light of sacred truth, however clearly and brightly it may be shining on those dwelling in the higher regions of practical holiness. But on the other hand, devotedness to God will help us clearly to discriminate between what is vain, and trifling, and worthless; and what is holy, and wise, and excellent, and we shall not spend our days and our nights on things, the knowledge of which will neither glorify God nor benefit man. "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God." (Eccl. ii, 26.)

Confessing our Lord Christ before our fellow creatures is another step to divine knowledge. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God: and we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love." (1 John iv, 15, 16.) A faithful profession of the gospel calls for those dispositions which are so much dwelt upon in the divine record, faith, hope, love, and holy courage; and we understand them in exercising them with a clearness infinitely beyond what any speculative notion can give. The actings of this confession of Christ as it respects others, often painfully call forth and disclose the enmity of the natural heart, and thus furnish a practical commentary illustrating the scriptural description of that enmity. We get a new and lively understanding on actual experience of statements which come in every page of the Bible. We find religion to be the same from the beginning, and that we, like Moses, if we would belong to the true church, must choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." But as St. John intimates in the passage above quoted, this confession of Christ is connected with more immediate communion with God, and a more rich discovery of his love. Afflictions arising from a faithful profession are a special blessing. (Phil. i, 29.) He walks closely with God, he knows much of God, he greatly enjoys God, who in faith, humility, and love, boldly confesses Christ before men: the very crosses, opposition, contempt, and mortifications, which he has to pass through, lead him to more intimate communion with that heavenly Parent for whose cause he suffers. How spiritual and heavenly are the letters of Bradford from prison, and of Rutherford written while confined in Aberdeen for his confession of Christ!

Ready obedience to God's precepts directly tends to lead us to embrace all the main principles of the gospel. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." Every step in obedience more and more shows us the truth of scriptural doctrines. The standard of obedience is absolute perfection; to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves—to be perfect as God is perfect. When really aiming to reach this standard, as every Christian will aim to do, he will feel that he has to maintain a constant conflict with opposing dispositions, and that there are multiplied hindrances within his own heart; he will thus perpetually be led to see how short he comes, how evil his heart, how entire his dependance on divine grace for daily pardon and daily strength; he will see the impossibility of acceptance but in the beloved Son, and will be prepared to admit the elements, at least, of those deeper doctrines which show us the wonderful love of God in originating our individual salvation before time began, and in engaging his power to perfect it in everlasting felicity when time shall be no more. Our Lord observes, that on love to God and love to man, "the two great commandments, hang all the law and the prophets." Errors in religion spring from the neglect of them; the true plan of revelation will be comprehended accord-

ing as we simply and heartily and honestly aim to fulfill them.

Family instruction is a step to divine knowledge, as well as a material point in the Christian character of every head of a family. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do—for I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." God gave to Abraham a peculiar insight into his purposes. Family instruction however, in general, is a school for the teacher as well as the taught. A faithful head of a Christian household will daily, morning and evening, read a portion of Scripture to his family; this cannot be done without placing the Scriptures in a new aspect to his mind. He will try to add practical observations to this portion, either gathered from other works, or arising from his own meditations. These practical observations, gathered for direct and particular edification, will farther tend to promote and increase the best kind of knowledge. May the author add that it is heartily to be wished that every head of a family would try to attain the holy skill of exposition in his family. He should be a priest in his own house, and this skill is of more easy attainment, and, we are persuaded, of much more important benefit, than is often supposed. Christians might thus become more fitted for extensive usefulness, and those Christian laborers who have peculiar talents might more easily be called forth into that field which is white for the harvest, while the reapers are wanting to gather it in. We would caution all however against any thing tedious and wearisome. Short striking addresses to the conscience drawn from the passage, like arrows from the bow, penetrate the heart; but full, and minute, and lengthened common place explanation, wearies and disgusts, and is in ordinary circumstances quite out of place in the family. Much, very much of the true blessedness of this service will depend on the lively piety of the expounder. We are persuaded that there are few Christian masters who might not thus make family prayer such a blessing, that the strife among children and servants should not be, who may be absent, but who may be present, and a necessary absence would be felt to be a loss and privation. And while there would be this effect in the family, the master would be ripening day by day unto all the full maturity and rich experience of Christian wisdom.

Visiting the poor is another most instructive part of Christian holiness. All who have in a right spirit been thus occupied, will have found it quite a school of divinity. The very best lessons in divine knowledge are there acquired. We see the practical working of truth on the mind: we learn what touches the heart; what truths respond again. The poor are more free from some of those artificial trammels which a highly cultivated and refined state of society has thrown around the upper ranks of life. They express their feelings more openly and strongly, and having often been greatly exercised, their faith and Christian experience are sometimes very great. One of the best universities, and one far too much unvisited, is the retired apartment of suffering poverty, the cottage or the garret of the afflicted; and one of the best lectures in divinity, and most fruitful of Christian conferences, is conversation on the things of God, with those "poor of this world" whom God hath "chosen rich in faith." Many a minister has there first learnt the lesson of saving knowledge for his own soul, and thence has carried the best lessons which he could give to his people. Christian student, then ever remember, that one leading part of "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

We would once more illustrate this subject by the Christian's *growth in grace*: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day:" there is the light of knowledge, and the light of holiness, and both advance together in the path of the just. Our Lord told the Jews who believed on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii, 31, 32. Knowledge and growth

in grace are united in the direction, "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and the connexion shows that this direction has an immediate reference to those things which are "hard to be understood," and being "led away with the error of the wicked." The Apostle Paul in a similar way connects "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. i, 10. The experienced Christian has acquired a deep insight of his natural depravity; he has seen his weakness and his tendency to fall into the worst sins when left to himself, and thence Jesus and his great salvation become increasingly understood, and increasingly precious. God reveals himself to "the pure in heart;" (Matt. v, 8,) and as the Christian advances in purity, in deadness to the world, and devotedness to God, he sees more of the divine glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and more admires that wonderful system of grace which rescues the polluted sinner from the mire of sin, and makes him the child of God, the heir of heavenly glory, and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. In that rich cluster of evangelical graces mentioned by the Apostle Peter, we see the reciprocal influence of advanced piety and knowledge fully displayed. Knowledge is here seen surrounded with lovely graces and virtues. "Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brothely-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

Let no student then think that his studying hours are lost because he is not always reading, but sometimes more actively and directly obeying; because he is not always in his library, but sometimes engaged in visititing the poor and in the direct service of God.* For every thing there is a time and season; and if we are wise to discern the seasonable duty, and steadily pursue it, and duly improve it, knowledge and holiness will be progressively advancing as in a divine school; the lessons may vary in different parts of the day, but the general improvement of the scholar is advancing in each lesson, and by these different parts pursued together the full ripeness of the Christian character is attained.

The most edifying works in the Christian's library have not been written by those confined exclusively to their closets. The Cyprians and Augustines, the Luthers and Calvins, the Cranmers and Jewells, the Owens and Baxters, the Halls and Leightons of former days, were men so full of active duty, that one is astonished that they could ever find time for their varied writings. Had they not been so occupied in works of righteousness, they would never have given us those rich experimental and practical treatises which we have received from them.

Let us then be willing to resign our studies for our more practical duties, even when most intensely engaged in them; even though a chain of thought may perhaps be broken which we cannot afterwards recover. These self-denying efforts will not be without an ample recompense in the very studies which we seem to be deserting.

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* Baxter says, in his Reformed Pastor, "If you grow not extensively in knowledge, you will by this way of diligent practice obtain the intensive and more excellent growth. If you know not so many things as others, you will know the great things better than they; for this serious dealing with sinners for their salvation will help you to far deeper apprehensions of the saving principles of religion than you can get by any other means.—By serious talking of everlasting things and teaching the creed, or some short catechism, you may grow more in knowledge, (though not in the knowledge of more things,) and prove much wiser men than if you spent that time in studying common, or curious, and less necessary things.—He will be the ablest physician, lawyer, and divine also, that adds practice and experience proportionably to his studies."

But let us, on the other hand, be diligent to resume (when the opportunity is again returned to us) that close study which ordinarily is essentially requisite to enable us to acquire that enlarged knowledge which leads to extended usefulness. And more especially let us begin our studies with getting our hearts into a right frame, remembering our Christian principles, and sending up our aspirations to the Father of Lights, and the Giver of all Wisdom.

There is another influence of holiness as it affects others. As Christ displayed the glory of the Father, so the glory of the Father and of the Son is to be displayed to the world in the work of the Spirit on the hearts of Christians. Their truth, love, joy, peace, holiness and happiness are to manifest the invisible God to man, so that he may be glorified. What a book is the Christian life! What a display of God's truth to all his fellow creatures, is the conduct of the Christian! It is the most practical book in the world; it is of all appeals to the understanding and the heart, the most eloquent, and touching, and convincing.

We cannot close this interesting subject, without adverting to that heavenly country to which the Christian is going, where both knowledge and holiness shall be perfected, and yet increasing through eternity. O blessed region, where "his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads;" knowledge will act upon holiness, and holiness upon knowledge, in an endless advance and progression; and beholding our Saviour "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is!

Christians, with what diligence, then, should we follow that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord!"

CHAPTER III.

The divine teaching which God has promised.

The happy influence of practical holiness on attaining religious knowledge, is in perfect harmony and consistency with the high hope which God has given us of Divine teaching. Holiness is itself one gracious and principal effect of heavenly instruction; hence David prays, "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." Psalm cxliii, 10. And hence St. Paul describes Christians as "taught of God to love one another."

In Bishop Taylor's valuable sermon, preached to the University of Dublin, showing by what means scholars may become most learned and useful, he observes, "In this inquiry I must take one thing for a 'præcognitum,' that every good man is *θεοδίδακτος*, he is taught of God; and indeed unless he teach us, we shall make but ill scholars ourselves, and worse guides to others. *Nemo potest Deum scire, nisi a Deo doceatur;* No one can know God unless he be taught of God, said Irenæus."

We allow and press, as has been seen, the importance of human studies. In the forcible words of Melancthon, "the Scripture cannot be understood theologically unless it be first understood grammatically." But things subordinate are not opposed to that to which they are subordinate.

Human sciences are to be learned from human authors, and by human instruction or research. Astronomy, navigation, geography, anatomy, and the like, except in peculiar circumstances, (Exod. xxxi, 3,) are to be acquired with that general assistance and blessing of God which is common to all; but there is a peculiarity about the study of divinity, answering to its unspeakable magnitude and importance; we need, in addition to all human instruction, divine teaching. Divinity is taught by God himself, both as it regards its principles in his word, and their right reception in the understanding, and their full influence on the heart. It is the more needful to dwell on this subject, as there is nothing that we are naturally more prone to overlook; and yet the whole of a happy result of faithful and diligent study depends entirely on our attaining this aid, and being a partaker of this blessing. No direc-

tions can at all ultimately and savingly profit us, but as the Divine Spirit gives them life and efficacy.

The testimony of Scripture is delightfully distinct and decisive on this point. Let any candid mind consider such passages as occur so repeatedly in the 119th Psalm; (for instance, verses 12, 18, 27, 33, 66, 73, 124, 125, 135, 144; or Psalm xxv, 4, 5, 8, 9,) or the promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke xi, 13,) or of wisdom from above (James i, 5, 17, 18:) let him bear in mind that the petitions for divine teaching are offered up by persons in possession of the inspired word; and the promises made to men of certain dispositions (Psalm xxv;) and we see not how it is possible to avoid the conclusion, that the Scriptures do very decidedly and explicitly lead us to the full hope that, in addition to the inspired word, and to give us a due understanding of it, God is ready to bestow, on those that ask, divine teaching; a teaching without which we cannot truly know and receive sacred truth; but by the aid of which we shall be taught his statutes so as to become wise unto salvation.

May we ever have that humility of mind which led John the Baptist to say, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." John iii, 27. Thence come all our light and all our honour, all our usefulness and all our happiness.

This divine teaching is peculiarly promised under the Gospel dispensation; "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Isa. liv. 13. It is the superior excellence of the new beyond the old covenant, that God has promised that all truly interested in it, from the least to the greatest, shall have divine illumination. "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." It is true that spiritual blessings come by hearing, but only as God in his sovereign love gives the increase. It is true that there are different degrees of knowledge, and that due means must be used to increase our knowledge, (1 John, ii, 21;) yet it is perfectly clear that Christians in general have a teaching beyond and superior to man's teaching; seeing St. John says to all, "Ye need not that any man teach you: but, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." 1 John ii, 27.

Nothing can be more important than such promises. Amidst the countless variety of opinions, formed even by those who study the sacred records, amidst the multitude of religious controversies of every kind, amidst the bustle and distractions of the various occupations of life, pressing on our immediate attention for our necessary maintenance, or for our continual welfare, O how great the necessity of an infallible Teacher!

Yes; urge the Romanists: and such a teacher we present you in *our* church; a human, yet an abiding and an infallible guide. Alas! all pretences to a human guide of this character are disproved, not only as God has never promised such a teacher, but as those by whom the claim has been advanced, whether they be popes or councils have maintained and promulgated perfectly opposite opinions. Even teachers rendered infallible under a divine inspiration, and generally allowed to be such, could not wholly prevent different opinions respecting important truths. We see this in the apostolic age. The Apostles were living, they were the authors of the Christian books, they were divinely inspired, yet even in their day there was a Diotrephes, there were evil men and seducers, there were many false teachers. There was no want of light and evidence as to truth, but the want of a sanctified heart to receive it; so that, even apostolic authority could not prevent heresy. If *they* could not, how vain must be the hopes of uninspired teachers, whose pretences to infallibility are rendered perfectly nugatory by the interminable disputes where it is lodged.

The actual state of man sufficiently accounts for this tendency to different opinions. Man is a fallen creature, with many sinful dispositions, full of pride and vanity, seeking distinction and self-elevation. Christianity meets and opposes every sin. While men's deeds are

evil, they will try in all ways to change a standard which thwarts every corruption; or to make that very standard a means of earthly and individual glory. These things necessarily produce great differences, and show the need and importance of a teaching beyond man's, which shall change the inner man, renew the heart, and dispose our minds to attend to, and duly receive and comprehend, spiritual and eternal things.

Besides the corruption of the heart, let it never be forgotten that there is a malignant spirit "who worketh in the children of disobedience." He is the great deceiver. He first led Eve into fatal error, and the Apostolic caution is of great importance, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ."

The distinction of the whole human race into two classes, *the righteous and the wicked*, illustrate this subject. Dr. Buchanan, preaching at Cambridge, and speaking of the present as an era of light, which he proves by the efforts now making to spread the gospel, says, "It is of vast consequence to the purity and perpetuity of our church, that those students who are preparing to enter it, should have just views on this subject. There is one fact which ought frequently to be illustrated to them, as being the foundation on which they are to form a judgment on this and other parts of the divine dispensation.

"There have ever been two descriptions of persons in the Church. They are denominated by our Saviour, "the children of light, and the children of this world;" and again, "the children of the wicked one, and the children of the kingdom." Matt. xiii, 38. These different terms originate entirely from our receiving that illumination which God, who cannot lie, has promised to give them that ask him. For if a man supplicate the Father of Lights for his good and perfect gift, with a humble and believing spirit, he will soon be sensible of the effect on his own mind.—Another consequence will be this; he will learn, for the first time, what is meant by the reproach of the world."

Here then is the true and the only infallible Teacher, the Holy Spirit, who guides into all truth. For ever blessed be God, that he has promised such a Teacher, and given us the cheering, consoling, and delightful hope that he will instruct us.

The infinite goodness of God in vouchsafing such a Teacher, will be the more clearly seen when we remember that spiritual blindness is not merely a misfortune; it is a fault; it is seriously criminal. It is not owing to want of ability, for the most wise of this world are often spiritually foolish. It is not owing to want of instruction; for such as Judas had the best instruction; but it is the perverseness of the heart, rejecting the divinely revealed description of the infinitely glorious God, hating his holy character, and preferring, from the love of sin, its own carnal conceptions and principles. Spiritual blindness alleges, as an excuse for our sin, the fact, that we have no disposition to love God, when it is in truth the extreme aggravation of our sin. Not love him who is infinitely amiable and lovely! how criminal the heart which is destitute of this love! how yet more criminal he who justifies himself in sin, from the want of such love! Yet this is our state by nature. And towards such hostile minds, God has showed the richest mercy; "he commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

This divine teaching is quite distinct from, and superior to, a knowledge of the doctrines and system of Christianity. Spiritual ignorance is very consistent with doctrinal knowledge. Satan has doctrinal knowledge, but he has no true apprehension of the divine glory, no relish for the divine beauty. He hates that which is good, because his own works are evil. We want an internal, spiritual sense, the gift of God, to discover to us the excellence of the divine nature.

Mr. Law puts this in a strong light when he remarks: "The empty letter learned knowledge, which the natural man can as easily have of the sacred

Scriptures and religious matters, as of any other books or human affairs, being taken for divine knowledge, has spread such darkness and delusion all over Christendom, as may be reckoned no less than a general apostacy from the gospel state of divine illumination. The best ability of the natural man can go no farther than talk, and notions and opinions about Scripture words and facts: on these he may be a great critic, an acute logician, a powerful orator, and know every thing of the Scripture except the spirit and the truth." A man is not therefore the better able to receive and comprehend the great essential truths of Christianity in their real influence, because he is a great critic, or a great scholar. No illiterate man has farther wandered from the truth than have some great scholars. Divine illumination gives us to know truth in its holy influence, and in its real experience and enjoyment.

Witsius happily distinguishes the acquisitions of human intellect, and those arising from the divine teaching: showing the infinite superiority of the latter, he says "one who is a scholar of this heavenly academy, not only knows and believes, but has a sensible perception of what is remission of sins, and the privileges of adoption, and familiar communion with God, and the grace of the Spirit inhabiting the breast, and the love of God poured out in the heart, and the hidden manna, and the sweet love of Christ, and the earnest and pledge of perfect felicity.*

We depreciate not talent and genius, and human industry, and learning, and accurate elaborate, and comprehensive human knowledge. These have their office, and under divine grace they are of eminent and extensive use in the fulfillment of that office: but let them not usurp a prerogative which is not theirs, that of obtaining for, or communicating to the soul, the spiritual judgment and experience by which we discern the things of the Spirit of God. Here, "he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man, 1 Cor. ii. 15.

It is not sufficient to object, "The most acute reasoning has been urged in depreciation of reason; the advocate of special inspiration declaims against the presumption of human reasoning:" that may be perfectly true, and yet reason be wholly incompetent fully to discern spiritual things. Nay, let us take care lest we object to the blessed Apostle, who exercised the highest powers of reasoning in his Epistles; and yet asserts, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." The teaching of the Holy Spirit does not take away or weaken our reasoning powers; it rather improves them to the utmost, but it puts them in their proper place in due subordination to higher powers, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The whole question is, What do the Scriptures testify?

Perhaps the grand defect of most theological writers is, the not constantly adverting to the need of divine teaching, to make us wise unto salvation; and the great success of such spiritual and devotional treatises as have been a means of edifying the church through successive ages, has arisen from their clearly and distinctly bringing forward our dependance on divine grace. Such books as Augustine's Confessions, and Thomas a Kempis, are eminently useful, simply on this ground.

* The following remarks of Bishop Hall (quoted by Knox, Sect. I. of his Christian Philosophy) confirm and illustrate this statement. "There is not so much need of learning as of grace to apprehend those things which concern our everlasting peace; neither is it our brain that must be set to work, but our hearts. However excellent the use of scholarship in all the sacred employments of divinity, yet in the main act, which import salvation, skill must give place to affection. Happy is the soul that is possest of Christ, how poor soever in all inferior endowments. Ye are wide, O ye great wits, while ye spend yourselves in curious questions and learned extravagancies. Ye shall find one touch of Christ more worth to your souls than all your deep and laborious disquisitions. In vain shall ye seek for this in your books if you miss it in your bosoms. If you know all things, and cannot say, *I know in whom I have believed*, you have but knowledge enough to know yourselves completely miserable. The deep mysteries of godliness, which to the great clerks of this world are as a book clasped and sealed up, lie open before him (the pious and devont man) fair and legible, and while those bookmen know whom they have heard of, he knows whom he has believed."

The mode of divine teaching calls for attention. There are particulars on this point which, like the winds of the heavens, are beyond human investigation (John iii, 8;) but there are other particulars of great practical moment for our instruction and edification.

God does not now teach by supernatural means; as he taught the prophets and apostles, and enabled them to write the inspired volume. He does not ordinarily teach without human instrumentality, and specially, he teaches through his own word. The standard or criterion of this instruction, is the inspired volume. All claim to it, contrary to, or beyond the written word, and not under the sanction and regulation of that word, is a dangerous delusion. The Saviour is the great Mediator, by whom this blessing comes.

The Father, through the mediation of Christ, communicates, by the Spirit, this divine teaching to his children. The Holy Ghost is the main agent. The Divine Spirit enables us to know the things that are freely given to us of God. 1 Cor. ii, 12. The Lord promises "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things. John xiv, 26. Of this St. John, speaking to Christians in general, says, "The annointing which ye have received of him abideth in you," and "ye need not that any man teach you." He dispels prejudices, he preserves from dangerous error, he guides unto all necessary truth, he makes our study itself devotional, humble, and practical. He removes the averseness of the affections, and he turns the will to God. He especially reveals to the inward man the grace and glory of the Saviour. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv, 6.

Bishop Jewell well observes, "As the the Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, so must they be expounded by the same, for without the Spirit we have neither ears to hear, nor eyes to see. It is the Spirit that opens, and no man shuts: he same shuts, and no man opens. The same Spirit prepared and opened the silk woman's heart, that she should give ear to and consider the things that were spoken by Paul; and in respect of the Spirit, the prophet Isaiah says, "they shall be all taught of God."'

So Luther, in a letter to Spalatinus, after recommending to his notice certain parts of the writings of Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine, exhorts him always to begin his studies with serious prayer; for, says he, "There is really no interpreter of the divine word but its own author."

Divine teaching is manifested and *evidenced* by three principal features—the discovery of our sinfulness, the leading us to rest in Christ as our only righteousness before God, and the victory over the temptations of our spiritual enemy. Our Lord dwells particularly on these operations of the Spirit. John xvi, 7—15.

1. The Holy Spirit alone *shows us our sinfulness.* There is darkness spread over the human mind, it is encrusted with prejudices, it cannot discover *the sinfulness* of sin, but under divine teaching. The glory of the Divine attributes, the reasonableness, purity, and beauty of the divine law, the obliquity of the human heart and the human conduct are never duly seen till this divine Illuminator shine in the heart.

2. Divine teaching is farther evidenced by leading *us to rest in Christ as our only righteousness before God.* According to that promise, he shall "convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father." The Jews made a ruinous mistake here (Rom. x, 1—4.) The gospel is the display of the divine righteousness in our free justification by faith in Christ. Rom. i, 17; iii, 21—26. Now men come to him for this blessing, under divine drawing and instruction. "Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." John vi. 45. As by the teaching of the Spirit, we discover the glory of God in his attributes, the purity of his law, and the sinfulness of man; so is it also his gracious office to take of the things of Christ, and show them to us; (John xvi, 14.) and thus we are brought, deeply sensible of our guilt and ruin, our poverty and necessity, to the Holy Saviour, gratefully and gladly

to accept his free salvation. He discovers to us the suitableness, the riches, and the glories of that salvation; and hence he is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;" and our faith in Christ is ascribed to the same "mighty power that raised Christ from the dead." Eph. i, 17—20. But without divine assistance we shall, through our corruption, reject Christ and his salvation. Matt. xiii, 11; John xii, 37—40.

3. Another evidence of illumination from above effectually secures this doctrine from abuse—the victory *over the temptations of our spiritual enemy.* The Holy Ghost delivers men from the power of sin and Satan. He makes them holy. He leads them in the paths of righteousness. A decisive evidence of divine illumination is love to the law of God, (See Psalm cxix, throughout,) and obedience to the divine commands. "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commands. He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." All religious confidence, consistent with the habitual indulgence of unholy tempers, evil words, or a sinful life, is a mere pretence, directly opposed both to the very nature of the gospel, the whole current of scripture, and the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit thus gives Christians an illumination far beyond the mere head-knowledge; the light is more clear and vivid, the enjoyment is more experimental, the sense of personal interest is far stronger, and the influence to practical obedience is far more efficacious.

It is freely allowed, that there have been those who have greatly abused this doctrine, and made it an occasion of self-complacency, contempt of others, and reproaches against them. They could not give a more striking evidence of their own want of that, in the fancied possession of which they boast. How discriminating are St. James's words on this head; after bidding the truly wise man to "show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom;" and, after speaking of such wisdom as is "earthly, sensual, and devilish," he thus describes that which God gives—"The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

The author has the more insisted on this subject, from its having been much disregarded. A modern writer has, in his lectures, rather depreciated than brought forward the assistance of the Spirit: at least, this appears to be the tendency of his comparison between the Romanist and the Enthusiast, and other observations. We plead not for any supernatural apostolic inspiration; we plead not for any who claim infallibility, whether Papist or Protestant; but we do plead against the idea that reason and learning can of themselves guide us to the full meaning of Scripture. We do plead against a mere general admission, that our endeavors are fruitless without the ordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, while the tendency of the observations is to show, that reason and learning are every thing. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is of main and vital importance, and should therefore be prominently urged, and not casually admitted.

The promises of this teaching belong to *all the children of God.* Isa. liv, 13; Acts ii, 39. They are not confined to holy prophets and apostles; they are not confined to the time of miracles and the first ages of the church; they belong to all ages, and are a part of the new covenant, (Jer. xxxi, 33, 34,) belonging to the church from the first outpouring on the day of Pentecost, to the final consummation of all things. John xiv, 16. Wherever any one comes to Jesus Christ, and relies on him, and thus lays hold of the new covenant, there is this divine teaching. The most ungifted and unlearned, the most guilty and the most poluted, may apply for, and, if they ask in the name of Jesus, shall receive this teaching, and be enlightened and instructed.

How delightful, then, that most encouraging declaration, "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." You can make out no reason why you should not go to the Saviour for this gift. All your unwor-

thiness, your sins, your corruptions, your hard heart, your backslidings, do but show your need of this resource. Just such sinners he came to save.

Let us then cast away all pride, and renounce all self-sufficiency. Let us remember his promises. "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way; the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." Let us urge the earnest prayer, "Show me thy way, Oh Lord; teach me thy paths; lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation;" and we shall ourselves be living witnesses of the fulfillment of his declaration to his church, "All thy children shall be taught of me."

And if we are seeking and have received this divine gift, let us ever remember "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." The Holy Spirit imparts his gifts, not for self-exaltation, vain glory, or self-aggrandizement, but for the salvation of our souls, for the edification of all around us, and the general good of our fellow-creatures. Just as "God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it pleases him—that the members should have the same care one for another;" so the Holy Spirit divides his gifts to each individual believer, for the general good of the whole church.

If divine teaching is so necessary, *Prayer is the great prerequisite in all our studies.* We need to have this urgently enforced, as we suffer the greatest loss in our everlasting concerns by reading without prayer. We read much, we pray little. The best proficients have been those who have prayed most. "Dr. Doddridge used frequently to observe, that he never advanced well in human learning without prayer, and that he always made the most proficiency in his studies when he prayed with the greatest frequency and fervor." Lord Bacon's requirements were preceded by prayer. (See his prayer, chap. x.) Milton's Paradise Lost was not written without prayer. His thoughts on planning it were these: "This is not to be attained but by devout prayer to the Eternal Spirit, that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compassed, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." Dr. Johnson infers, "From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the Paradise Lost." How earnest are David's prayers for divine teaching, through the 119th Psalm. How distinctly the apostle adds prayer to meditation, when he says to Timothy, "Consider these things, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

In fact all our knowledge of every kind should be made the subject of prayer, both as to its attainment and its application, or we have no security that it will not be perverted rather than improved, and draw the heart from God rather than draw it near to him; be used against him rather than for him; and puff up with pride rather than humble us in the deeper discovery of our ignorance. But knowledge which is preceded by prayer for its acquisition and right application, will be a real blessing to ourselves and to others, will not deaden but promote spiritual affections.

Prayer for divine teaching.

Father of Lights, and God of all grace! Thou hast promised that thou wilt give wisdom to them that ask thee. Feeling my own ignorance, I now ask of thee to impart out of the fulness of him in whom are hid all the treasure of wisdom, the gift of heavenly wisdom.

I live in a world full of error and full of sin; and to whom can I look with any certainty but unto thee, Oh Lord. Enlighten my understanding, purify my affections, and guard me from error. Let not the wicked delude me, and let not the mistakes even of the righteous lead me astray. I am as fallible and liable to error as others, leave me not therefore to myself, but enable me to adhere to thy word, and give me the abundance of thy Spirit to guide me into all truth, and

make me wise unto salvation, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

The study of the Scriptures in particular.

The study of the Scriptures is so essential a part of the work of the Christian student, that it requires distinct and primary consideration. Let us never forget, in all our studies, that there is but one book of supreme, and paramount, and incalculable value—*the word of God*—A book to be constantly studied by all ranks and all classes. This is admitted by Protestants; but it is to be feared that the admission has hardly sufficient influence on any of our minds and practice. The best students have agreed in asserting that the Holy Scriptures claim the first attention. Melancthon, in his brief method of studying theology, recommends as the first requisite, a familiarity with the text of the Sacred Scriptures; and in order to this, that they should be read daily both morning and evening. The testimonies of men of the greatest learning in their last moments afford strong evidence of the importance of paying chief attention to the word of God. Notice those of Selden and Salmasius. Of Selden, Lord Clarendon says, "He was of so stupendous a learning, that a man would have thought he had never spent an hour but in reading and writing." When near the end of his days, he declared to Archbishop Usher, that "though he had been laborious in his literary inquiries, and possessed a number of valuable manuscripts on all ancient subjects, yet he would rest the happiness of his soul on none of them except the Holy Scriptures." Salmasius was one of the most learned men, the monarch and the tyrant of literature. At the close of his life he acknowledged, that he had too much and too earnestly engaged in literary pursuits, and greatly overlooked those objects in which true and solid happiness consists. He said, "Oh I have lost a world of time; time, that most precious thing in the world! Had I but one year more, it should be spent in studying David's Psalms, and Paul's Epistles."

When *commencing* the study of divine truth, amid all the jarring opinions of human authors, it is of inexpressible moment to begin with studying the pure word of God, and to go regularly through the whole of that word, before we prepossess our minds with human opinions:—while *continuing* the study of divine truth, it is also of vast moment constantly to keep up the daily reading of considerable portions of the pure word of God, and so to keep scriptural truth, as it has been observed, continually revolving in the mind. It will be the only effective preservative against the taint and deterioration which the mind might otherwise receive from reading human authors:—and when *closing* our studies, and approaching the borders of another world, O how important to "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly," and to become more familiar with the spirit of those blessed servants of God, with whom we hope to abide through eternity.

Professor Campbell, in his Treatise on Systematic Theology, has insisted much, and in the author's opinion very forcibly on the importance of pursuing this plan; and that previous to reading any work on the evidences, any commentaries or, any doctrinal books. He says, "Devoutly study the Scriptures themselves, if you would understand their doctrine in singleness of heart. The only assistance which I would recommend, are those in which there can be no tendency to warp your judgment: It is the serious and frequent reading of the Divine Oracles, accompanied with fervent prayer; it is the comparing of Scripture with Scripture; it is the diligent study of the languages in which they are written; it is the knowledge of those histories and antiquities to which they allude. These indeed will not tell you what you are to judge of every passage, and so much the better. God has given you judgment, and requires you to exercise it. "And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right.'" He states after-

wards how much may be done on this plan with the Bible in the original languages, and a concordance.

In fact, we are entirely incompetent to determine what is God's truth, till we have diligently searched his word. We may, as it has been forcibly expressed, merely "rise to the inheritance of the false opinions of others." The conclusion to which President Edwards came, as the result of real experience—"I find it would be very much to my advantage to be thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. When I am reading doctrinal books, or books of controversy, I can proceed with abundantly more confidence, and can see upon what foundation I stand."

Our time for being enriched with divine knowledge is also very limited. Suppose a man were to be introduced into the bank, and he were told, you are to be here but half an hour, there is such a place filled with gold, and such with silver, and such with copper, and you may take away from each as many bags as you please; we all know that he would go to that place where the gold was. The precious gold of truth is contained in the Holy Scriptures, and our main study should be to get, and then diffuse, as much as possible of this gold. Other books may be studied as helpful to this end, or to the right fulfilling of our respective stations: but the studies of a Christian, and especially of a Christian minister, ought to be appropriate. It is a shame to any man, but especially to him, to know little of that book which is the foundation of his religion and of the highest of human hopes and joys—to be a great classic, a first-rate philosopher, a skilful physician, an experienced chemist or geologist, and an ignorant divine, or Christian—what a just ground of reproach!* Even a high degree of critical knowledge of the Scriptures is a poor, and little thing, compared with a sound judgment, a comprehensive view, and a practical understanding and experience of the doctrines, and privileges, and the duties of the word of God. It is especially the office of ministers "to be mighty in the Scriptures;" and this is the only commendation of eloquence in a Christian minister which we have in the word of God.

"The capital error," says Burnet, in the conclusion to the history of his own times, "the capital error in men's preparing themselves for that function, is that they study books more than themselves, and that they read Divinity more in other books than in the Scriptures." It is one important error in our studies; but we need besides, and most of all, the teaching of the blessed Spirit to prepare us to be able ministers of the new covenant. (2 Cor. iii, 6.)

It is the testimony of Erasmus, (one very competent to give such a testimony,) "There is no man but may be a Divine, for which nothing is requisite, but to know what Jesus Christ has taught, and to practise it; and all that is necessary for learning it, is to read the Gospel. Men often repent that they have spent too much time in reading the works of men: but happy is that man who is surprised by death, while he is meditating on the Holy Scriptures. Let us, then, have a mighty ardor for this divine book. Let us honour it; let us turn it over every moment; let us die while we are reading it; let us be changed into it, seeing studies do form the manners of men."*

Looking at the history of the Church, we find fluctuations in the course of divinity, and considerable variations in the publicly acknowledged standards: if we build, then, on the authority of man, even as embodied in public creeds and confessions of the purest churches, we anchor our hopes on that which will not hold

* Perhaps objections may arise in the mind against the study of the Bible, that the book is so common, that it is of little importance to know it; a knowledge of it will come as a matter of course; all can read it at any time. But the commonness of a blessing is not a sign of its being of little value, else the air we breathe, the water we drink, the light we enjoy, were little blessings. Nor will a valuable knowledge of it be attained without much patience and constant study; and is there not justly attached, from its being common and universally diffused, a special opprobrium to any remarkable ignorance of it?

* See his method of studying true Divinity.

firm in the tempest. Let us rest on the unchanging word of God. No other faith is a divine faith.

Admitting, as the author fully does, the value, in many important respects, of creeds and confessions: yet, with the exception of presumption, and rash and hasty judgment, there is hardly a more dangerous snare than that of building our faith on mere human authority. If we dare not hold an opinion but as it is sustained by human names or classes of society, our faith is not divine faith, resting on God's word. Our mind should be independent of every thing except the word of God, and what that word sanctions. There is immense temptation to join particular classes of men, in order to be thus bulwarked, and defended, and supported, amid the conflict of opinions in the world; but we want that which will stand in the hour of death, when we enter alone into the eternal world, and in the day of judgment when we give account singly to our great Judge: and, if we aim at this we have what will give decision and firmness to our minds in this world. If, when doubts and difficulties arise, and we are in suspense of judgment, we were to read a portion of the Scriptures, it would most probably give light to the subject that could not be acquired from other sources. The danger of taking sentiments on trust, merely of human authority, has always extensively prevailed: because Augstine, Luther, or Cranmer in older days, or Scott, or Milner in modern times, have said so, therefore Christians repose upon it. This is giving a kind of inspired authority to men. Let not our faith be in teachers, but in God's word.

Hildersham, in an address before his Exposition of John, wisely thus discriminates as to the use of human authors—"When scholars furnish themselves with store of other writers, besides the Scriptures, and being little conversant in the Scriptures, draw the Scriptures to the authors whom they most affect, and not their authors to the Scriptures; their divinity proves but humanity, and their ministry speaks to the brain, but not to the conscience of the hearer. But he that digs all the treasures of his knowledge and the ground of religion out of the Scriptures, and makes use of other authors, not for ostentation of himself, nor for the ground of his faith, nor for the principal ornament of his ministry, but for the better searching out of the deep wisdom of the Scriptures, such an one believes what he teaches, not by a human credulity from his author, but by a divine faith from the word, and because he believes, therefore he speaks, and speaking from faith in his own heart, he speaks much more powerfully to the begetting and strengthening of faith in the hearer."

How great then is the folly of those, who rather than take pains to study divine truth, will implicitly, and at all adventures, believe what the society of Christians, in which they have been born or educated, have truly or falsely delivered. "They who would not believe a proposition in statistics," about a mere point, without investigation; "yet," says Boyle, "they take up the articles of faith concerning matters of great and everlasting consequence, on the authority of men fallible as themselves, when satisfaction may be had without them from the infallible word of God." But we must also watch against the opposite snare of presumption and self-wisdom, and form our judgment of existing systems not hastily and rashly, not positively and harshly, as if all wisdom centred in ourselves, but modestly and patiently, kindly, slowly, and humbly, as Cranmer, Ridley, Melancthon and even Luther did.

Nothing is infallible truth but what is revealed and declared in the divine word; and this truth is there declared generally in a more interesting, obvious, and plain way, than in any merely human productions. We do not undervalue other books. We are very far from being disposed to say of them, as the barbarian Sultan Omar said of the famous Alexandrian Library—"If these writings of the Greeks agree with the Koran, they are useless, and need not be preserved, if they disagree, they are pernicious, and must be destroyed." Other books have their use, and are valuable in their place; but let us first take the Holy Scriptures, to give us just views and impressions.

The importance of a supreme regard to the Bible, as it respects a right judgment in controverted points, is strongly shown by Chillingworth—"I, for my part, after a long, and, as I verily believe and hope, impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but on this rock only. I see plainly and with my own eyes that there are popes against popes, councils against councils;* some fathers against others, the same fathers against themselves; a consent of fathers of one age against the consent of fathers of another; the church of one age against the church of another. Traditive interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are none to be found. No tradition of Scripture can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that in such an age it was not. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty but of Scripture only, for any considerate man to build upon." It has been observed, long since, that the conscience can never find sure footing till it comes to the Scripture. Chrysostom says, "If any thing be spoken without Scripture, the knowledge of the hearer halts." His meaning is, that the judgment is never firm, till Scripture has resolved it. St. Augustine says, "It is of no force to tell the people, This I say, and this such an one says; it is only *Thus saith the Lord*, that strikes the strokes and does either convince or convert the hearer's conscience. . . I would not have you follow my authority as though you should think yourself bound to believe what I say, because I say it"*

A similar and impressive testimony is given by our own country to the excellence of the Bible, when, on presenting it to our monarch at the coronation, the archbishop says to him, "Our gracious king! we present unto your majesty this book the most valuable thing that the world affordeth. Here is wisdom. This is the royal law. These are the lively oracles of God. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this book; that keep and do the things contained in it: for these are the words of eternal life, able to make you wise and happy in this world, nay, wise unto salvation, and so happy for evermore, through faith which is in Christ Jesus; to whom be glory for evermore. Amen."

All things relating to religion may be resolved into these two great questions,—Is the Bible the word of God? What does

* The expressions of St. Gregory Nazianzen, in the fourth century, though tinged with acrimony and disappointed feeling, strongly show how councils may be abused. He says, writing to Procopius to excuse his attendance at a synod at Constantinople, "To tell you plainly, I am determined to fly all conventions of Bishops; for I never yet saw a council that ended happily. Instead of lessening, they invariably augment the mischief. The passion for victory, and the lust of power, (you will perhaps think my freedom intolerable,) are not to be described in words. One present as a judge will much more readily catch the infection from others, than be able to restrain it in them. For this reason I must conclude that the only security of one's peace and virtue is retirement." Yet if all men had acted on this principle, we should have lost the truth. Paul and Barnabas preserved the purity of the church by their firmness at the first council, (Acts xv, 2.) Paul withstood Peter in another assembly, and so maintained the simplicity of the gospel. (Gal. ii, 14.)

* As there are those who pretend to build on antiquity, and yet endeavor to restrain the circulation of the Scriptures, it may be well to add one or two more quotations from the Fathers on this point. Augustine, on the 8th Psalm, says, "God has bowed down the Scriptures and suited them to the capacities of babes and sucklings." Cyprian in a letter to Pompey, says, "It is easy both to displace error and discover truth, for if we advert to the head and origin of divine tradition, error will cease." The context shows that he alludes to the Holy Scriptures. He then compares the failure of truth, to a copious and abundant conduit of water which had refreshed a whole country, ceasing to convey the fertilizing stream; in which case men will naturally go to the fountain head. Theodoret has recorded this noble declaration of Constantine before the Nicene Council, held in 325—"The evangelical and apostolical books, and also the oracles of the ancient prophets, plainly instruct us in the divine mind; therefore, laying aside all hostile disagreements, let us take the explanation of questions from the sayings of the divine Spirit." Gregory the great, in one of his letters, says, "As the word of God contains in it mysteries capable of exercising the most penetrating wit, so does it also afford plain and manifest truths, fit for the nourishment of the simple and less knowing. On the surface there is milk for children, and within its secret recesses there is matter of admiration and wonder for the most delicate." He says in another place, "The Scripture is incomparably beyond all other writing, in that it proclaims nothing but truths."

the Bible teach? To be able to answer the first satisfactorily, is a great and important duty. The Scriptures must be read, the evidences must be weighed, and light must be sought from above, that the mind may come to a clear and decided conviction. To answer the second, the Scriptures also must first be diligently sought, and cavils must not be admitted; it being proved to be the word of God, submission of mind to its ascertained truth, even where we cannot harmonize them, is as great a duty, as diligent inquiry to ascertain what these truths are. Men of an infidel spirit have scrutinized and sifted the Bible with as little reverence as if it were a mere human classic. But, while in all other books, we have to exercise our judgment as to what is right and wrong, and are bound to leave the wrong: there is a vast difference in the Bible. It is God's word, and we have by that book to correct every other impression.

All sentiments on religion that are not founded on the word of God and drawn from it, however they may pretend to bring us to a state of purity and holiness, are in reality vain. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." 1 Cor. iii, 20. "The word of Christ," says Bradford, "and not learned men, is the lantern to lighten our steps. Learned men are to be listened unto and followed according to God's Law. Learning, if it be not according to the light of God's word, is poison, and learned men most pernicious."

For it must not be forgotten, in estimating the importance of a supreme regard to the word of God, that the chief false and corrupt systems that have troubled the church, have arisen from neglect of this blessed book: this is evidently and eminently the case in the two grand antichristian systems of Popery and Mahomedanism. All revivals in religion have also been connected with a marked and paramount regard to the divine word.

Jewell, showing how popery had been overthrown in the days of the Reformation, says, "This is the force of God's word; this is the power of the gospel; these be the weapons by which was overthrown every fortification which is raised against the knowledge of God. This doctrine should be preached through the whole world in despite of them all."

We shall not want motives to a constant study of the pure word of God, if we remember that it is *the only book* having divine authority—being a pure fountain of truth,—having a special promise of sanctifying blessings connected with its devout perusal—and alone deciding religious controversies. It is *the only book* that we are commanded of God to read—that the whole church reads and loves—that prepares us for heaven—and that will endure for ever. In all other books, there is a human mixture, and there is therefore error; but the Bible is the word of God, as opposed to the word of man, and is not only without error, but the source and guard of all saving truth. It is therefore that peculiar and special instrument by which the Holy Spirit works in the salvation of man. Human books and statements are only blessed as they contain, enforce, and illustrate Bible truths.

Supremely venerate the written word. It is recorded of the beloved Martyn, that "so deep was his veneration for the word of God, that when a suspicion arose in his mind, that any other book which he was studying was about to gain an undue influence over his affections, he instantly laid it aside; nor would he resume it, till he had felt and realized the paramount excellence of the Divine Oracles;" he could not rest satisfied till he felt again the infinitely superior worth of the Scriptures.

Read the Bible then first, read it in the middle of other studies, read it last of all. There ought to be no part of the Scriptures to which you have been long a stranger. The whole should be read through again and again. Let it be your daily, constant, and never-failing companion and guide. Let its truths be continually revolving in your mind. Look upward for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. No commentator teaches as He teaches, "He giveth wisdom," and that "liberally, and upbraideth not." In this book, under his teaching, you may place unreserved confidence, you will find sweet repose, holy affections, and perfect security. The Bible never shunned the strict-

est investigation, it ever courted the fullest light, and repaid the most devout and constant perusal. The more it is studied, and searched, and yielded to, as the regulator of the heart, and the guide of the life, the more it will be valued and made beneficial to us. But search with humility. "The Scriptures are impenetrable to the proud, low in appearance, sublime in operation, and veiled with mysteries." Desire to be made holy. It is a temptation in searching the Scriptures to seek rather knowledge than holiness—to obtain skill to know and teach rather than grace to obey. Who has not felt the danger of impatience and the love of novelty? They are just remarks of a Roman Catholic writer: "The most ordinary obstacles to our progress in the study of the Scriptures are curiosity and eagerness. The impatience of knowing still more, hurries us on, and the love of the truth is less the spring of our vivacity, than that of novelty. A slow and silent study of a single sentence of the Scriptures, like a heavenly dew, would sink deep into our minds, and refresh them; whereas haste and precipitation, like an impetuous rain, which runs off almost as fast as it falls, leaves us unimproved, after reading whole books, as we were before."

It is true that there are many beautiful flowers and valuable productions on the very surface of the Scriptures; but there are hidden mines of wealth, and we must not, by indolence and indifference, lose those spiritual riches which we might acquire by patient research.

The author having at large, in another work (the Scripture Help,) stated his views on the importance of studying the Scriptures, and on the mode of searching them, he would here forbear farther remarks on this subject, except as connected with the study of the original Scriptures.

Christian Students would find many advantages in being well acquainted with the *Hebrew Scriptures*. Bishop Horsley says, "The knowledge of Hebrew is an essential accomplishment of a divine." Ministers especially should not be ignorant of the original language which conveys a large part of their commission. Can any translation convey the whole spirit and strength of the author into a foreign tongue? Have not many eminently useful Christians spoken highly of the benefit of this knowledge?

Melancthon, speaking modestly of his own attainments in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, says, he prefers the little knowledge which he had attained, to all the kingdoms of the world, and all their riches. He exhorts all youth diligently to pursue the study of the Hebrew. Luther, in a similar manner, earnestly presses the study of the Hebrew; and says that he would not be without his little knowledge, which he had found so useful against his enemies the Papists, for infinite thousands of gold. Gerhard says, "It is miserable to see with the eye of others, and especially for him who is appointed the eye of others."

It was the custom of the reformed Churches abroad, to propose to the theological candidate, on his examination, to read and interpret the first chapter which presented itself, on opening the Bible, in either Testament.

Dr. Buchanan's remarks on this subject, in his sermons preached at Cambridge before the University, are worthy of deep attention. He says, 'It may be received as an axiom, that a knowledge of Hebrew learning among the great body of the clergy is the mark of a flourishing church; that is, of a church which is ardent in maintaining the true faith, and in expounding the pure word of God to the people." He also observes, "It is hardly possibly to suppose that the student who has read the whole of the Old Testament in the original tongue, with the attention which such a course requires, should be a contemptible divine. For in the course of his study he will be necessarily led into various useful and important investigations of which he would otherwise never have thought. Another benefit would accrue. It will be a salutary exercise to his own heart. The assiduous study of the sacred volume for one year will, if any thing can, call his thoughts from the vain pursuits of the world, and fix them on the solemn duties of the profession on which he is about to enter. Before he has gone through the Old Testament, he will find it to be truly what the

poet calls *τηγη ρεουσα πειθους*, "a fountain pouring forth persuations," to seek heavenly knowledge and purity of life.

"It may be added, that to read the Old Testament in the original language is the way to understand the New. The student who has made himself acquainted with the treasures of revealed truth under the first dispensation, will not stop there, but will proceed with impatience to a still nobler theme in the inspired strains of the New Testament, which are written for the most part in the idioms of the Old. And here he will have the advantage of that rich and precious mine for the theologian, the Syriac New Testament; for he who can read the Old Testament in Hebrew, will soon be able to read the New in Syriac. I call it a rich and precious mine, for Syriac is the language which our blessed Lord himself spake in the land of Judea; and it is probable that every parable and every speech in the four Gospels is recorded nearly in the very words which proceeded from his lips."

He adds a remark on the means of reviving this study, which is too important to be omitted.

"The power of reviving Hebrew learning in the Church lies principally with the bishops. It is presumed that the object might be effected by the following means: by requiring that candidates for deacons' orders should be able to construe the Hebrew Pentateuch; and those who offer themselves for priests' orders should be competent to read the whole of the Old Testament, *ad aperturam libri;* and by refusing ordination to candidates coming from the universities, who should continue, after due notice, for which three years would suffice, to neglect to acquire this qualification. By this simple regulation, it is probable that Hebrew literature would be restored very generally to the Church in a few years."*

Many of Dr. Buchanan's remarks apply also to the Greek Scriptures. Some of the noblest heathen writings being in the Greek language, it has never been so neglected as the Hebrew has. Owing to this incidental circumstance, rather than to the vigour of scriptural piety, many can study the most important of all books in the original tongue. It is very desirable that this knowledge should be maintained and turned to the best use by a daily study of the Greek Testament.

The Septuagint and the original writings of Josephus and Philo Judæus, will familiarize the idiom of the New Testament to the student, and to the mode of life, thought, and expression common to the Jews.

The author would only add one caution, with reference to the original Scriptures, that no student should think the daily critical reading of a chapter in them will supersede the daily devout study of the translation of them in our own language. We want every day a study distinct from critical study, a prayerful, humble, self-applicatory, devotional, meditation upon the word, and our souls will assuredly suffer loss if we neglect this.

Let no man think that the diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures will leave him with slight and imperfect knowledge. Such a study embraces the chief points of all human learning and science. In thoroughly knowing the Bible, he will know the most ancient and authentic history, the most sublime strain of poetry, the most just lessons of deep wisdom to guide his life, the most curious antiquities of nations, the most perfect book of devotions, the only infallible theology, and a sufficient sketch of all false theology; the true origin and nature of the world in which he lives, and the only true information concerning that to which he is going, he will have laid open to him the elements of oratory, and the purest specimens of eloquence; the secret spring of all human actions, and the chief events that shall hereafter take place up to the final judgment of all things. One justly said, "Give me a candle and a Bible in a dark dungeon, and keep me there, and I will tell you all that the world is doing." What an unveiling of the true character of that world in the book of Ecclesiastes! What a depth of practical and daily wisdom in proverbs! Where is there grandeur of sentiments comparable to the sentiments

* See Dr. Buchanan's Sermons, pages 21, 69, 70.

contained in the prophets! The whole Bible in all its parts is complete and entire; a solution of all the most important questions that the humble and upright mind of an immortal spirit need now be desirous of having answered, and a guide to the full supply of every want in God, our reconciled Father, our satisfying portion, and our final rest.

Let no man think that once or twice reading the Scriptures will exhaust its sacred treasures, or because the words may be familiar he has acquired all the meaning and knowledge which those words convey. There is always in the sacred word, when we read it in a serious and devout spirit, something new that enlightens the mind, excites holy feelings, and edifies the heart.

"Such is the depth of holy Scripture," says St. Augustine, "that I could draw from it every day of my life fresh advantages, although I had already spent an age in the study of it, and that too with the greatest and uninterrupted application; not that the things necessary to salvation are hard to come at, but because when every individual shall have drawn his faith from thence for the religious conduct of his life, there will still remain an infinite number of things concealed under mysterious veils for those to search into who would make further advances in this science. For there is such a sublimity and dignity not only in the expression, but in the things themselves, that the most subtle and sagacious, although far advanced in life, and thirsting after the knowledge of these sacred books, finds that text verified in him, which says, when a man thinks he has finished his work, he is but then beginning. The manner in which the holy Scriptures are expressed is so wonderful, that it is scarce penetrable by any man, although it be at the same time intelligible to all the world. In those things that are clear and manifest it speaks like a familiar friend, without disguise and artifice, to the heart of both the learned and the ignorant; and although some of its truths are hidden under mysterious expressions, yet it is not done in a haughty style, so as to discourage lowly minds, and hinder their approach as the poor are fearful of approaching the rich and the great, but on the contrary it invites all the world by its simplicity, and encourages us to gather refreshment from its manifest truths, and to exercise ourselves in the search of its hidden ones, bringing with us to both, the same fund of wisdom and understanding."

Blessed, then, for ever blessed be our God, for that inestimable gift, the word of his grace! This word, like its divine Author, the rock of ages, remains immoveably fixed, unchangeably the same. The worldly man thinks he can do without it, and his building perishes. The subtle disputant thinks that he has rubbed off its rough and unsightly parts, but his subtlety passes away and is remembered no more. The waves of error dash against it on every side, and are all in course broken at its feet. The Bible in its majestic grandeur lifts up its towering head, only the more proved by every assault, to be the word of Him that liveth and abideth for ever.

While the reading of the holy Scriptures is thus earnestly pressed, let us not forget that without the enlightening beams of the blessed Spirit all will be in vain: let us never read them without asking for divine teaching. How clearly our reformers saw this, and how careful they were to teach this, will be evident from the following prayer in Edward the VIth's Primer, with which we close the chapter.

Prayer for the true understanding of God's Word.

O Lord, as thou alone art the author of the holy Scriptures, so likewise can no man, although he be never so wise, politic, and learned, understand them, except he be taught by thy Holy Spirit, which alone is the school-master to lead the faithful unto all truth. Vouchsafe therefore, I most humbly beseech thee, to breathe into my heart thy blessed Spirit, which may renew the senses of my mind, open my judgment, reveal unto me the true understanding of thy holy mysteries, and plant in me such a certain and infallible knowledge of thy truth, that no subtle persuasion of man's

wisdom may pluck me from thy truth, but that as I have learned the true understanding of thy blessed will, so I may remain in the same continually, come life, come death, unto the glory of thy blessed name.

CHAPTER V.

The Character of Scriptural Divinity.

When we look at the different sentiments prevailing among the various bodies of Christians who all profess to derive their opinions from the word of God; and when we notice the diversity which exists even among those who belong to the same denomination, it may seem a hopeless task to state in an unexceptionable manner the character of scriptural divinity.

Yet Christians are agreed in far more sentiments, and those the main and most important truths, than at first sight might be supposed. The infidel is not so secure as he imagines in his boast on the ground of their divisions. All having any just claim to the name of Christians, however humble or deficient in talent and learning, have a fuller knowledge of the leading outlines of divine truth, than Socrates or Cicero ever had, and agree in more important points than ever obtained the concurrence of men of the sublimest genius and the highest intellects in the heathen world, and probably come nearer to each other in far more points, and those too of chief moment, than they themselves are generally aware.

Differences of opinion arise, and are aggravated and multiplied, not from the indecision or indistinctness of revealed truth, but from our indistinctness of conception, and the corruption of our hearts. Here indeed is the chief cause of all differences of sentiments. While men love sin, they will put darkness for light, and call good evil, and evil good. Different sentiments entertained by men holding the same revelation, arise not therefore mainly from the obscurity of the Scriptures, nor from the limited intellect of man, but mainly from the evil heart of unbelief. Instead of throwing a doubt on Christianity, they do but evidence how true its doctrines are. Look at the different opinions on the declarations and on the character of prophets and apostles coming with miracles and inspired authority, which were entertained by their hearers, while the inspired writers lived, and see how the love of sin alienated the mind from the reception of the truth.

May the Holy Spirit deliver our minds from the prejudices and errors which the corrupted nature of man thus engenders, and enable us to discern the leading characteristics of divine truth. Christian union is love to one another "for the truth's sake." 2 John 1—3; 3 John 1. May we discern then those truths which, held by all real Christians, notwithstanding they are in different Christian communions, unite them together as one family in brotherly love. A clear perception of such truths would furnish a clue or guide to the student with reference to all his future studies.

The grand truth of Scripture is one from the beginning to the end. The Apostle expresses it when he says—"We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Here is the substance of the Bible, from the first promise of the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent, to the last declaration in the revelation of his love and power. All the rays of divine truth proceed hence, all the lines centre here. Christ Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, coming into the world to save sinners from the power of sin and Satan, to save them fully, freely, and eternally; Christ Jesus, the only light, life, hope, purifier, and joy of the whole earth; this is the topic, the main topic of the Bible, and the uniting point of the Church below, and the Church above. Christ dying for sinners, this is the one thing to be first of all known. The Bible is the "word of Christ; the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." He is "the Alpha and Omega;" the grand theme of Christian ministers on earth, and the burden of the song among the blessed above. To endear the name of Christ, and to ex-

hibit the excellence of his redeeming love seems throughout to be the grand object of historians, prophets, and apostles, through the sacred volume. The mode of speaking on this point strongly manifests its primary importance. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts x, 43. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. i, 15.) "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix, 10.) "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv, 12.) "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii, 16.) Here, the leading truth, the character of scriptural divinity, salvation through faith in a Redeemer, is clear and obvious. Divine truth is therefore eminently "the truth as it is in Jesus," (Ephes. iv, 21,) and bears an intimate and constant relation to him.

Hence we may observe, that when Christians were in the beginning admitted into the church, they had simply to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Saviour. "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." (Acts viii, 37.) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi, 31.)

This was the grand bond of union. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." (1 Cor. xii, 12.) "We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." (Rom. xii, 5.) The want of love to the Saviour was the point which the apostle singled out as marking those from whom he separated. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema, maranatha;" (1 Cor. xvi, 22,) and genuine love to him was the distinguishing character of those for whom he specially desired the divine favour. "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." (Ephes. vi, 24.)

Happy would have been the state of the church, had only this primitive simplicity of doctrine continued to be needful. But soon false doctrine crept in, heresies spread, and it became necessary, in consequence of the subtilty and artifices of those who calumniated or perverted the truth, to form creeds, confessions, and articles of faith. These have gradually enlarged, but the remedy, while it has preserved the great essentials of doctrine from age to age, has like all human remedies, failed of fully accomplishing its object, and has in some degree multiplied the divisions which it was intended to heal.

Creeds were at first very simple, as we see in the Apostles' Creed. Bishop Davenant, in his Treatise on Brotherly Communion, considers the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Two Sacraments, a sufficient ground of union and communion among all the churches of Christ.

Certainly, unduly to press lesser points, and to make large requirements of faith, is the way to excite and perpetuate disunion. If we would be united, we must discern and rise to those great things in which real Christians concur. Only let us remember on the one hand, that union purchased at the expense of important truth is too dearly bought, and on the other, expressed unanimity in lesser points is too dearly preserved, if preserved with the loss of brotherly love, with extended duplicity, and with a greatly contracted communion of the church.

Human systems are, after all like every thing human, imperfect. Mr. Newton has justly observed—"The fault of the several systems under which, as under so many banners, the different denominations of Christians are ranged is, that there is usually something left out which ought to have been taken in, and something admitted of supposed advantage, not authorized by the scriptural standard. A Bible Christian therefore will see much to approve in a variety of forms and parties; the providence of God may lead or fix him in a more immediate connexion with some one of them, but his spirit and affection will not be confined within these narrow enclosures. He insensibly borrows and unites that which is excellent

in each, perhaps without knowing how far he agrees with them, because he finds all in the written word."

Let us, taking these things into consideration, endeavor to estimate the character of scriptural divinity. We will consider the subject under two heads, the leading truths of Christianity, and the mode of their statement.

With regard to *leading truths;* there is one primary truth from which all others branch out, Christ Jesus the Saviour of sinners, to which we have already adverted. A statement by St. Paul will confirm and illustrate this point. Speaking of the doctrines preached by ministers, he says—"Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build on this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. iii, 11—15.)

Such then is the foundation of true doctrine, and such are the various structures which may be raised on that foundation. The holy apostle has himself, in his own Epistles, given a beautiful example of laying the sure foundation, and erecting on it a noble superstructure of holy affections and practical obedience.

It is of main importance then in forming a judgment respecting religious truth, that we mark this point first, Is the foundation clearly laid? The first question is not whether a man be of the Syriac, Greek, or Roman church; whether he be Lutheran or Reformed, Calvinist or Arminian, Church of England or Presbyterian, Congregationalist or Wesleyan. There are points of very considerable importance for discussion; as to each of these classes of Christians; but the first, the grand, the vital question, concerns the foundation. If a man be really building on the right foundation, we hesitate not to say, whatever his external denomination may be, we should view him as a brother, a partaker of the benefit; he is with us going to one home, we hope to dwell with him in that home for ever, and in this view, he has an undoubted claim to the Christian love which we owe to the brethren. On the other hand, if he neglects and despises, and refuses to build on the sure foundation, whatever his external denomination may be, we cannot be united, we cannot hold communion with such, with that peculiar regard which is the distinguishing feature in the intercourse of real Christians.

The Church of England most distinctly lays this *foundation.* Its second Article clearly asserts that Christ truly suffered "to reconcile the Father to us, and to be a sacrifice not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men." Its eleventh expressly declares, "we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings."

When we remember the solemn admonition, "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed: as we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed:" When we recollect that this solemnly announced, this twice repeated, this divinely inspired anathema, relates to a system of doctrine which required the performance of the works of the law, in conjunction with the redemption of Christ, as the ground of salvation, and was addressed to members of a church ordered and planted by the apostles, how important is it to be especially careful that we fall not into an error from which an excellent external communion does not exempt us, and to which, alas! human nature is particularly prone, and on which the divine wrath is so severely denounced.

If that be a vital, primary, and fundamental doctrine, which most closely concerns our spiritual life here, and our daily walk with God, this is specially the case with the doctrine of Christ; for "no

man cometh unto the Father" but by him; it is "through him that we have access by one Spirit."

This foundation should be laid deeply, distinctly, broadly, and prominently, as it is by the sacred writers of the New Testament. They shun not to declare constantly and plainly, the saving name of Christ. See how perspicuously the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians attest that we are saved by grace through faith, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Every where that sacred and fragrant name diffuses its odour. (Canticles i, 3.) It is seen oftener in one of the apostolic pages, than in whole sermons of some who profess to be his ministers. All duties are shown to have their most powerful motive in his love, and their life only through his Spirit; all blessings are treasured up in him; he in short is "all and in all." The main substance of divinity may be considered as preaching Christ.* In him the Father is manifested, by him the world is reconciled to God, through him the Spirit is communicated; first, "the grace of our Lord Jesus," then "the love of God," and then "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

But looking at actual facts, we fear that it must be said, that in the minds of a large proportion of professing Christians, this foundation is so far from being laid, that other and false foundations are substituted in its place. The subject, though delicate, is of such vital interest, that it is not right to shrink from an explicit statement of foundations, the insufficiency of which the day of final decision will make fully manifest. It is of immense moment to our everlasting welfare to detect and expose false foundations, lest men venturing to build thereon perish for ever.

Some build on *a dead faith:* a mere assent to Christian doctrines, and a bold forward profession, imagining that this is the faith commended in Scripture, which ensures salvation. Men awake to their danger, feeling their ruin, and conscience convicting them of sin, and showing them that they are under the fearful penalty of the divine law, naturally look out for a remedy. It is a remedy very pleasant to the natural heart, it is an easy way to imagine that hearing, receiving, and professing a system of truths will be sufficient. But against this notion runs the whole current of the Scriptures. It is to do that which Ezekiel describes as building "a wall with untempered mortar," that shall certainly fall. (Ezek. xiii, 10.) This is what our Lord warns against (Luke vi, 49.) "He that heareth and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." This is what St. James condemns: "O vain man, faith without works is dead." (James ii, 20.) If the fruits of faith are neglected and disregarded, there is no Scriptural divinity.

Others build on *excited feelings:* they make the movement and working of the feelings the grand criterion of truth. If they can weep with affectionate concern, if they have lively emotions of joy in religion, there is a foundation they imagine on which they can trust. But it may, after all, be selfish feeling and mere delusion. The stony-ground hearers thus received the word, but soon fell away. Simon Magus heard, wondered, believed, and was baptised. To make excited feelings the main thing is to depart from the true foundation.

Our own obedience is another rock of false confidence, on which millions have

* It is allowed that we may preach Christ injudiciously and unscripturally, without reference to the whole of his salvation from pollution as well as from guilt, and forcing the application of passages to him,—and some harm may be thus done. It is a remark of one of the Fathers in the 5th century,—"If ye strive with violence to draw and apply those texts to Christ which apparently pertain not to him, we shall gain nothing but this, to make all the places that are spoken of him suspected; and so discredit the strength of other testimonies, which the church usually gives for the refutation of the Jews." Yet let this be taken in connexion with another observation, the dying remark of Eliot to a brother minister; it is worthy of constant regard: "Brother, brother, let there be much of Christ in your ministry, if you would ever win souls. I dread a Christless Christianity." Luther asserts that "whatsoever is prayed, taught, or acted out of Christ, is before God idolatry and sin."

built to their everlasting ruin. No human works can stand the judgment of God. They may obtain praise from man, they may for the present quiet our own minds. But all this is a small matter, and indeed of no moment at all, as it regards an eternal sentence. Not man, nor our conscience, but the Lord shall judge. He declares, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." What man then dare presume to stand on the foundation of his own obedience? It will not sustain the building, it shakes in every part, it has already failed in the court of our own conscience, and how can it stand before God?

Religious acts are another foundation on which many teach men to rest. To offer up prayers, to come to public worship, to receive the sacrament, and give money in charity, is with them the sum of religion, and they speak as if we were to obtain heaven by external acts of religion. We would not in the smallest degree undervalue such acts; they are plain duties, and we cannot be Christians if we voluntarily refuse to perform them; but to trust in them is to reject God's method of salvation, and to rely on a broken reed. Our best duties, so far from meriting any thing, themselves, need forgiveness. The Pharisee (Luke xviii. 11.) trusted in his prayers, and in his being free from gross sins, in his fasting, and in his giving tithes, and fell short of justification, because he rested on a false foundation.

The mercy of God, as urged by many, is a false foundation. They will say, "It is true that I am a sinner, but all are sinners, and God is merciful, and if we hope in his mercy and do our best all will be well." This is not the foundation laid in Zion. True, God is merciful, far beyond our largest thoughts, or else we should all have perished for ever. True, we should do our best; but who will stand forth and say, "I have always, in all things done my best:" and if we have not, what is to become of the claims of divine justice? God is holy as well as merciful; his holiness and his justice are as much against us as his mercy is for us. What shall we say, when his justice, strict and pure, and inexorable, demands our condemnation? It is eternity that is before us; if we fail, we fail for ever. Let us have then a divinely revealed, a firm and immoveable foundation.

Once more; another false foundation is that of *our goodness conjoined with the merit of Christ*. This is perhaps nature's most plausible device to evade the doctrine of grace. But the Scriptures clearly exclude our own works from the office of justifying in part as well as in the whole. The epistles to the Romans and Galatians are particularly express on this point. St. Paul, describing the conduct of the Jews, says to the Romans, (x, 3,4,) "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God: for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Again, (chap, xi, 6,) he says, "If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work." And he explicitly tells the Galatians, who trusted in a ceremonial work rather than in Christ, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." It is therefore a dangerous and fatal mistake to imagine that Christ will make up the deficiency of our works, and that through his merit they may obtain for us everlasting life. Nor are good dispositions requisite before we may venture to trust in Christ; nor need we any good thing to deserve his attention and regard, and give us confidence enough to apply to him. He died for the ungodly, and the most polluted are invited to return at once to him, who "came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

None of these methods bear the character of Scriptural divinity—they bring not glory to God exclusively, they shut not out boasting from man, and they furnish not the powerful motives to love God and love man, which characterize "the truth as it is in Jesus." Let

us cease from every vain hope, and attend to the divine admonition, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." Isa. xxviii, 16. Be not content to dig round about this foundation, to hear of Christ, to read of Christ, and to talk of Christ; but build on him, come to him in secret, and entrust your souls to him. The flood of divine wrath shall descend, and wash round the true foundation, and whatsoever is not built upon it shall be swept away. Be assured, "Christ crucified is the foundation of the sinner's hope; Christ on the mediatorial throne is the Lawgiver of the Redeemed; Christ by his word and Spirit in the heart is the believer's life; Christ in glory is the elevating object of the saint's expectation."

But supposing the primary truth to be really held, it is important that other truths be held scripturally. Men may build on a good foundation with materials that will not endure a trial, and though they may be saved, yet they may suffer great loss. There are many Roman Catholics who rest their hopes on Christ, and yet multiply superstitious ceremonies, justify the celibacy of the clergy, offer prayers to saints, and pray for the dead; all this is "wood, hay, and stubble." There are many among Protestants, who rest on Christ, and yet add human conditions and doctrines, or enthusiasm, or vain philosophy, and carnal reasonings—all this also is but "wood, hay, and stubble."

The Holy Scriptures furnish the approved and only just standard by which to try all. While we abstain from judging men's motives and character, which office belongs to the infallible Judge of all the earth, (Matt. vii, 1,) we must estimate the sentiments which come before us, (1 Thess. v, 21,) and are responsible for our own opinions, and whatever we communicate to others, under the most awful sanctions. The threatenings respecting additions to or diminutions from the divine word may well make every minister and every religious writer tremble. Rev. xxii, 18, 19.

It will help us in our study of divine truth to have leading truths well established in our minds. Luther says to the students of theology—"You who apply yourselves to sacred learning, be admonished above all things to settle in your minds what you should believe as the truths of the Christian religion, and have the articles of your faith well considered and confirmed by apposite texts of Scripture; and then, when the Devil, or heretics, his instruments, would make you doubt, oppose to them those texts, and leave them, saying, "I will not listen to your cavils and speculations; for thus hath the Holy Spirit directed, who commands me to hearken and incline mine ear." The doctrine that all our righteousness must be renounced, and our confidence placed only in Christ and his righteousness, will appear new and strange, so that many will be offended at it. So also will the doctrine that Christ himself is God, and to be worshipped as such." Luther himself, even in his advanced years, daily studied the Scriptures, and their most simple truths, and says, "When a multiplicity of business, or any other cause prevents my doing this, I sensibly feel the want of it. The word of God is given us thus to exercise and quicken our minds, which, without such a practice, contract rust, as it were, and lose their tone."

What then are those leading truths which may be called "the gold, silver, and precious stones" of divine truth. They are distinctly brought before us in the Catechisms published by the Reformers, and in the Harmony of the Confessions of the Protestant Churches, and they are devotionally embodied in the Liturgy of the English Church.

They may be summed up in some leading Articles, all of which we would here view, in connexion with the work of Christ. The great truths of religion, as connected with Christ, and built on him, are as follows:—

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our Creator, our Governor, our Preserver, our Judge, is and can be the only portion and happiness of his creatures. To know, glorify, and enjoy him is the great end of man. As a spiritual Being of infinite wisdom, power, purity

holiness, sovereignty, and love, he is eminently displayed to man, in Jesus Christ, and there we see him, our God, our Father, our portion, and our happiness.

The Divine glory, in all the rich perfections and wonderful combinations of justice and mercy, righteousness and peace, truth and compassion, united, illustrated, and harmonized in blessing sinful man—this is exhibited, and seen by us, only in the face of Jesus Christ: in his person, his righteousness, his atonement, and his mediation.

The personality, Deity, and work of the Holy Spirit are also manifested and connected with the life and death, the resurrection and ascension of our Saviour.

Our Lord Christ came to establish a kingdom on earth. This kingdom is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" it is not of this world, but it is spiritual. John xviii. 36. It was at its beginning but as a grain of mustard seed, but of "the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end;" and as this kingdom was the hope of his Church before he came, so its full and universal establishment is the hope and constant prayer of the Church now; "Thy kingdom come."

The holy law of God in its excellence, loveliness, extent, and obligation, as the unchangeable standard of right and wrong, and binding on every human being, is established in Christ Jesus: his life fulfilled it, his preaching enforced it, his death atoned for its violations: and in his mediatorial government provision is made for our obedience.

Exhortations to forsake all sin and live to God derive their vital energy and power from Gospel motives.

The sinfulness and helplessness of man, with the exceeding guilt of sin, are most of all manifested in Christ. It could not be for small sins and for a partial ruin that the Son of God came from heaven.

The immense value of the immortal soul is equally exhibited by the same stupendous fact. Would Christ have lived and died for a thing of little moment?

The entire freedom and the completeness of our salvation is all through Christ. He did not come to bring small and imperfect blessings.

All the means of grace, meditation, prayer, reading the Scriptures, self-examination, and the sacraments are efficacious only through His presence, mediation, and blessing.

The all-important doctrine of our free justification before God rests upon his redemption and his righteousness; and the sweet spirit of adoption is another main blessing received through faith in him. John i, 12.

His atonement opens the way for the return of the Holy Spirit, the very gift which, when ascended on high he received for our use, and which he now bestows upon us.

The sanctification of the sinner is therefore from Christ. He saves us *from* our sins; there is fulness of grace in him, and he communicates his Spirit to make us holy.

As sin is in Christ seen to be the worst evil and the cause of all our misery, so is holiness from him seen to be our real and only happiness. The fallen creature can only be happy by restoration to the favor and to the image of the Creator. Jesus Christ effects this double restoration.* In Christ the precepts, ceasing to be our task, become our privilege; the law is our charter of blessings, and the gospel the means of realizing those blessings. "I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts"—is a main blessing of the new covenant which Christ established.

All holy duties, such as repentance, humility, contrition, meekness, gentleness, bowels of mercies, tenderness, long-suffering, the fulfilling of our relative and social duties: all Christian graces, faith, hope, love, zeal, endurance to the end, all may be learned from Christ, and attained by his Spirit. He sits as a Refiner purifying his people.

It is to him we trace up the very ori-

* The two main blessings flowing from Christ, are justification and sanctification. They can never be separated. They both come from Christ; justification by his obedience unto death, sanctification by his Spirit.

gin of his Church: which was "chosen n Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy;" and he enables his people to persevere to the end.

To him must we look for the perfection of that Church. He gives his people the victory over death—he is their Saviour n the judgment day—he sends his enemies to everlasting punishment—he admits his servants to their heavenly inheritance, and he is their joy through eternity.

So do the leading truths of Christianity rest on one foundation. The substance s, "repentance towards God and faith in he Lord Jesus Christ—faith, hope, and love, these three—the grace of our Lord —exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus."

They bear throughout the character of mercy and grace to the children of God, proceeding by the appointment of the Father, from the Saviour, through the Spirit, by faith to the sinner, whose salvation is wholly of grace, from sin and unto holiness.

They bear throughout the divine displeasure against all sin, and the tremendous and never-ending ruin of the obstinate sinner: man's misery, entirely the effect of his own deliberately chosen sin, and that sin bringing him to death and everlasting ruin; man's salvation entirely of free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus, and that grace making him holy here, and happy for ever.

They tend throughout to reveal the invisible God to his creatures, seeing he thus, in his dealings with them, manifests his own nature, character, perfections, and glory. Hence the angels themselves desire to look into the things of the gospel; and at the commencement of the dispensation developed its character, as bringing "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

We have a human but perhaps one of the most wise and scriptural statements of these leading truths in the Articles of the Church of England. The great body of pious dissenters concur in those Articles, as far as they relate to doctrine. They are placed in admirable order, are expressed with much clearness and precision, and with remarkable wisdom and moderation, as it regards all those points on which good men have differed. Every Christian student will find in them a clear, sound, and useful summary of divine truth, worthy of deep and serious study.

Such is the Author's view (which he allows to be brief and imperfect) of the gold, silver, and precious stones of divine doctrine, to be built on the true foundation. Need he advert to the importance of this object to every Christian, and yet more to every Christian minister, as his influence has so much wider a range, that we do not build "wood, hay, and stubble" on a right foundation. Let us remember that the fire of daily trial even here, and of the last judgment hereafter, must manifest every doctrine, and if we would not build in vain, if we would not have our toil lost, if we would obtain a full reward, let us take heed that we build what will stand the test of the trial by fire.

An accurate and just view of leading truths we should have; but let us beware of letting any system cramp us in the free use of scriptural modes of expression; and whether as parents, teachers, or ministers, we should in a decided manner, like the Bible, our best and safest model, exhort to duty, threaten the sinner, invite the most polluted and guilty to come to Christ immediately, as they are, with all their load of sin, and give them the free promises of divine aid for their deliverance. We may be quite sure that the Bible is written on the right system, and that if our system does not admit of scriptural modes of address it is wrong.

Never think, however, that the belief of doctrines, whatever they may be, is the main point aimed at, and the ultimate object of the Holy Scriptures. Doctrines are revealed for the manifestation of the divine glory, and for the practical benefit of man, that the sinner may ultimately be conformed to the divine image, and made meet for heavenly enjoyment. They are worthless as to us, if so held as to be uninfluential on the heart, and not to produce charitable, meek, holy, and self-denying tempers and dispositions, from which will infallibly flow those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

It is not merely in its leading truths that we may see the character of scriptural divinity. Those truths are stated in such a peculiar manner as to call for distinct attention.

Divine truths are not stated abstractedly, as a mere theory to be established by argument, and proved by the moral fitness of things, or by their native beauty and excellence. We have not a statement, for instance, to explain the difficulties of the Trinity, or a dissertation to show the nature of the doctrine. It is revealed only in its devotional and practical connexions. We have indeed in the Romans and in the Ephesians, much of a system of divine truth in regular order, yet all is stated with reference to experience and practice, rather than as a mere theory. It is in short a revelation of the divine will from the great Lord of all to his sinful creatures; an authoritative declaration, rather than an argumentative proof, or a treatise to establish a human doctrine. There is a beautiful proportion given to every truth, according to its real character and use; and we disturb the order of that proportion, when we insist too prominently or too exclusively on one favorite doctrine, to the neglect of others, and so give a partial view of the whole.

The truths of revelation in the Bible are not generally either systematically arranged, or scholastically defined. They are rather incidentally introduced, with the exception of one or two of the Epistles, according to occasion, and in the way of common discourse. We hardly know where to turn for any explicit definitions of Scripture doctrine in the word of God. This actual position of divine truth in Scripture (promiscuously scattered throughout, and connected only by the subject matter of discourse, rather than by any artificial argument) is surely one of the most beautiful proofs of the wisdom of God. It is far better adapted to the bulk of mankind than any technical exactness. It better meets the prejudices of God's people, all of whom are prone to have their favorite doctrines, and who therefore, if they found them systematically defined in particular parts of Scripture, would probably be exclusive in their regard to those parts, and limited in their range of the whole. It suits also their establishment in the gospel. It is as it were a compounding of the whole matter of gospel truth into the bread of life, so that the whole nourishment is communicated. The mind gradually and insensibly imbibes the whole, and assimilates to its spirit.

Dr. Owen, whose attachment to system was not weak, yet observes, some men find fault with the Scriptures because divine truths are not thrown together in regular order, as in our catechisms. But God puts not such value on men's accurate methods as they imagine them to deserve. Nor are they so subservient to his ends in the revelation of himself as they are apt to fancy. Yet often when they think that they have brought truths into the strictest propriety of expression and order, they lose both their power and their glory. Hence is the world filled with so many lifeless, sapless, graceless, artificial declarations of divine truth, in the schoolmen and others. We may sooner squeeze water out of a pumice stone, than one drop of spiritual nourishment out of them. But how many millions of souls have received divine benefit and consolation exactly suited to their condition by those occasional occurrences of truth which they met with in the Scriptures, and which they would never have obtained by those wise artificial arrangements which some men would fancy. Truths have their efficacy and power in our minds, not only from themselves, but from their place and position in the Scriptures. They are placed in such respects towards us, and in such connexion one with another, as their influence upon our minds greatly depends on. Artificial methodizing of spiritual truths may make men ready in notions, cunning and subtle in disputations: but it is the Scripture itself in its own present arrangement which is able to make us wise unto salvation."

In *the mode of statement*, with reference to the character of Scriptural divinity, we may notice,

1. *The incomparable simplicity of Scriptural divinity.* When we read human writers, we are sometimes bewilder-

d in the multitude of words. There is a lucid perspicuity in the Bible. Here we see divine truth clearly. The light shines bright and full. "Whatever makes manifest is light," and the holy Scriptures are like a great flood of pure light, poured forth on a dark world, and the true source of its illumination and glory. You have often sublime eloquence, but all is the eloquence of simplicity, the grandeur of sentiment, and not of mere words. How wonderful is the simplicity of our Lord's character and discourses! There are no syllogisms or corollaries drawn with subtle art to perplex and puzzle the mind, but there are throughout sublime truths adapted alike to instruct and edify, exalt and purify—calculated to improve the lowest intellect and exercise the highest.

2. *Its constant reference to Almighty God as creating, overruling and directing all things to his own glory.* It displays man in his real character as the creature, the guilty creature; fallen, ruined, and yet spared and invited to return; but in every part of the Bible, as throughout the visible creation, God is seated upon his throne: "the Lord reigneth," directing, upholding, and controlling all. There is no hesitation here, but an uncompromising authority becoming the majesty of its Author. It is a proclamation from the court of Heaven; and each one without exception, whatever his wisdom, talent, or rank, must bow down to it. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, comes to our Lord for instruction. He pays no court to him, he tells him not what will please him, yet he gives him the most important truth. Nicodemus is stumbled, our Lord does not abate and modify his statement; he is the supreme King, let all his creatures, as they ought, yield unreserved submission to him.

3. *Its invariable holiness.* The Bible is the most holy book in the world. However particular passages may have been perverted, nothing can be farther from Antinomianism as a whole. It condemns sin in every part, and most of all in the mode of our deliverance from sin. After the richest displays of sovereign grace, it goes immediately to the good works, and the holy life, which are the fruit of that grace. Nothing has any pretence to the claims of Scriptural divinity, which consists with the allowed indulgence of one evil thought. How vivid the blaze of its threatening against all iniquity! How awful their execution in the person of the Surety, the Son of God himself! How alarming the state of those going on in sin under the Christian dispensation! "He that despised Moses' law perished without remedy; of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy!"

4. *Its inexpressible tenderness and affection.* No book is so full of tender feelings, of pathetic addresses, of heart-touching statements, as the Bible. It is not mere abstract truth, even in its most terse sentences; and its history is full of exquisitely affecting incidents. See Joseph's history, read Jeremiah, witness our Lord weeping over Jerusalem, notice the account of the Prodigal Son; mark Paul's character; observe him at Miletus; hear him addressing the Corinthians. Through the Bible, what tender expostulations, what affectionate entreaties, what earnest invitations! Scriptural divinity is truth, stated so as to win the heart by love. There is no self-exultation and vain display of learning in the teacher. No harsh requirements; no crabbed and bitter opposition. The very air of Bible truth is *love*.

> How charming is divine philosophy,
> Not harsh—and crabbed—
> But musical—as is Apollo's lute—
> And a perpetual feast.———MILTON.

5. *The spirit of devotion breathes in all the Scriptures.* God walking with man, and man walking with God, is the high privilege to which it tends throughout. It begins with this holy communion in Paradise, it exemplifies it in the character of God's servants in every part, it shows the full restoration of perfect and heavenly communion in eternity. You see the most lively exhibition of the very interior of this communion in the Psalms. You have it manifested in the midst of active life. You behold it all realized in one glorious character, Jesus Christ. Fine bursts of prayer are contin-

ually breaking forth from the Apostles in their letters to the churches; and you have the enraptured praises of the heavenly host of Revelation. No divinity is Scriptural that is not devotional.

6 *The peculiar doctrines of the Bible are made the spring of practical obedience.* You have in the first part of several Epistles, the doctrines; and in the last part the duties to be drawn from, and to follow such doctrines. When a precept is given, you will very generally find it connected with some one or other of the peculiar principles of the Scriptures. Thus the introduction to the decalogue, is, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought," &c. The principles are evangelical and spiritual. You may observe in every part of the Bible the utmost freedom in insisting on duties, without any fear of thereby awakening doctrines which might have the appearance of an opposing view. Men are in all cases called, if they would not perish, to give up their sins and turn to God; and yet the worst sinners are offered a free pardon. Our plan is not Scriptural unless we can readily act thus.

Yet *truth is stated in many different forms.* There is an advantage in this, as it is adapted thus to the various characters of men. God gives to each of his servants their proper gift. There are varied gifts in the sacred writers; the meek Moses, the devotional David, the eloquent Isaiah, the plaintive tender Jeremiah, the fervent Paul, the practical James, and the seraphic John, vary much in the character of their writings; but they deliver the same truths, and the common features of Christianity are still preserved by each. There may be very different gifts, and yet all be spiritually used. There may be much diversity of statement without any departure from the analogy of faith.

And thus it is in human writers in our day. There is the practical holiness of Walker of Truro, and the evangelical glow of Hervey; yet both according to the same analogy of faith. There is the doctrinal clearness of Perkins, and the devotion of Thomas a Kempis; and yet both built on one foundation.

It is not therefore, the mode of expression arising from the natural character of the writer, but the mode of its statement in connexion with Christ Jesus, and harmonizing with the general features of the gospel, which constitutes the character of scriptural divinity.

We conclude with a practical remark: *how much should we study the Scriptures,* that our mind may be embued with the train of thought and the very spirit of the sacred writers. Erroneous and unscriptural views arise from leaning to our own understanding and love of sin. Let us then read the Bible more with earnest petitions for the aid of that Holy Spirit, under whose inspiration this holy book was first written, so shall we leave beneath us the littleness of human systems, and ascend to the majesty, and see the glory, and taste the sweetness, of the Divine Word.

CHAPTER VI.

On the Study of Practical Works.

The influence of practical holiness on the acquisition of religious knowledge, has already been pointed out in the second chapter of this work, and all that was there said will tend to show the importance of studying those works, the direct aim of which is to promote personal religion. The knowledge which is directly and immediately connected with our duty and our salvation, is the first thing which, as Christian students, we have to learn.

The Scriptures in this, as well as in every other respect, justly claim precedence, as the best book of devotions, and the most practical work that can be read. Next to the Scriptures, the most heart-moving, and spiritual, and evangelical treatises that we can procure, treatises which many of the older writers furnish on such practical topics as conversion, prayer, temptation, death, the Saint's Rest, the Saviour, the Christian armour, contemplations on the Scriptures, &c. &c. should be daily read.

To furnish his mind with knowledge is but one part of the work of the Christian student. If this be all his aim, it

may qualify him to shine among men, and to dispute, and with some advantages, contend with those around him; but its results will only be to inflate him with pride, and disqualify him for the indispensable exercise of humility and love.

To affect the heart aright, is the more important part of study, and for this end, after prayer for the Holy Spirit and study of the Divine records, such books as I have mentioned must be read, and read in the spirit of seriousness, self-examination, and prayer, and thus we may be brought nearer to God.

It is the fault of many systems of divinity, and many plans of study, that they leave out this more important part. Whether it be from overvaluing knowledge, or thinking this less needful for immediate use, it is, however, evident that students have not frequently had pressed on their attention, the great importance of studying practical and devotional works. The pious Ludolf has observed that the "learned generally read authors, more out of a vain itch to fill their heads with knowledge and a party scheme, than with intent to improve their hearts in love, wisdom, humility, and meekness."

Such studies are in truth eminently needful for our real happiness and daily usefulness. If the heart be raised to communion with God, there is the best preparation for a spiritual discernment of the nature and value of the various sentiments, which in the course of other studies are brought before the mind.

Those books are mainly useful, those studies of prime importance, which directly tend to regulate the heart, to raise the flame of inward devotion, which makes us more spiritually-minded, more holy, and more heavenly. This course of study is most calculated to discover to us that interior truth of God's word which is often least of all revealed to those who are learned in critical disputations, and wholly engaged in verbal niceties. Indeed all the accomplishments of human learning may leave a man utterly devoid of spiritual knowledge, and under the full power of a corrupt heart.

We are ready to think that time lost which is devoted to practical studies. By no means. It is not a loss, but a gain of time to read pious and devout works. Very often we shall find even the very doctrines of the gospel more usefully, more wisely, and more soberly stated, than in direct controversial treatises on the subject, and they help us to acquire that state of mind which is essential to the right reception of truth.

It was a remark made to the Author by a pious friend, the Rev. Legh Richmond, now gone to his reward, when I told him of this work—"Let me beg you to press devotion of heart—devotional works; most students are dry and intellectual, and lose the best fruits of their studies."

This study should therefore be intermingled with all our other studies, and our leisure time on the Sabbath should be especially consecrated to it. It is a great temptation to diligent students to appropriate part of the Sabbath to those studies in which they are especially engaged during the week. Such a temptation should be strenuously resisted, and the retired hours of the Sabbath be given to devotional works. So shall we find a blessing on all our other studies. Our Saviour has declared that "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;" it will help us to do his will, and so rightly to understand the Scriptures, daily, and especially on Sundays, to peruse the most holy and spiritual treatises with which we can meet, such as Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Owen on Communion with God, Leighton's Peter, Adam's Private Thoughts, Kempis's Imitations of Christ, Serle's Horæ Solitariæ, Halyburton's Life, and similar works.*

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* Some other books may be here added, as eminently calculated for Sunday reading.

Hall's Contemplations,
Bridges on the 119th Psalm.
Alleine's Alarm.
Ambrose's Looking to Jesus.
Augustine's Confessions.
Corbet's Self-employment.
Guthrie's Trial of Saving Interest.
Jenk's Meditations.
Mason' Christian Companion.
Rambach's Meditations.
Shaw's Immanuel.
Flavel's Saint Indeed.
Serle's Christian Remembrancer.
Still's Horæ Privatæ.
Stukeley's Gospel Glass.
Sibbe's Bruised Reed.
Baxter's Converse with God.

Baxter justly remarks, in a book which cannot be wholly approved, (his Confession of Faith,) "Practice is the excellent help to be truly orthodox. The practical experimental preachers and people do hold fast those truths to salvation which opinionatists and mere disputers are either wholly drawn from, or hold but speculatively, and detain in unrighteousness to their own perdition." He adds, "the godly and learned do lose that truth too often in disputations which before they held in sober practice."

All who have deeply engaged in study have felt its tendency to draw the heart from God: so to occupy the intellect, that we forget, or think we have not time for the highest privilege of man, communion with God. What I mean is, that this, as well as any other pursuit that eagerly engages the mind, even though it be theological and scriptural in its subjects, may yet lead us away from that which should be the primary object of the Christian student: the life of God in the soul of man.

Mr. Law has some severe, but very important remarks on this subject in his Letters. He says, "A scholar, pitying the blindness and folly of those who live to themselves, in the cares and pleasures of this vain world, thinks himself divinely employed and to have escaped the pollutions of the world, because he is day after day, dividing, dissecting, and mending, Church opinions, fixing heresies here, and schisms there, forgetting all the while, that carnal self, and natural reason have the doing of all that is done by this learned zeal, and are as busy, as in the reasoning infidel or projecting worldling." He afterwards asserts, "Worldly lusts and interests, vanity, pride, envy, contention, bitterness, and ambition (the death of all that is good in the soul) have now, and always had, their chief nourishment, power, and support, from a sense of the merit and sufficiency of literary accomplishments. Humility, meekness, patience, faith, hope, contempt of the world, and heavenly affection, (the very life of Jesus in the soul,) are by few persons less earnestly desired, or more hard to be practised, than by great wits, classical critics, linguists, historians, and orators in holy orders."

In fact, the holy life of a Christian is the brightest evidence and the fullest glory of our religion. Christianity, thus embodied in the whole temper and conversation of a human being, is like the self-evident glory of the sun, sustained by the invisible hand of God, self-suspended in its course; its own light and warmth speak its excellence, and declare its blessedness. Mr. Law well observes, "A learned Christianity supported and governed by reason, dispute, and criticism, that is forced to appeal to canons and councils and ancient usages to defend itself, has lost its place, stands upon a fictitious foundation, and shows that it cannot appeal to itself, to its own works, which alone are the certain infallible proofs of a true or false Christianity."

May we then study practical books, and especially such practical books as are full of Christ and his salvation. A devout Christian will cordially concur in the sentiment of Augustine; "I am neither pleased with those writings, nor yet with that conversation, in which I find not a savour of the name of Jesus; for he is as honey to my mouth, music to my ears, and joy to my heart."

It is the practical experience of the Christian, it is his holy and spiritual knowledge, his pure and peaceable wisdom, which gives him, when destitute of literary acquirements, such an advantage in the perception of religious truth. In this he has a vast superiority over those who may possess literature in the highest degree, but have never had the experience in their own hearts of the truths which they have acquired with the understanding only. "The heart of the

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Baxter's Dying Thoughts.
Owen on Psalm 130.
" on Spiritual Mindedness.
Gurnal's Christian Armour.
Pascal's Thoughts.
Walker's Christian.
Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous.

But above all, eminently and emphatically, THE BIBLE read with prayer, with fervent persevering prayer, is the chief Sunday book of the Christian. Let other books never displace this *the* ONE BOOK.

wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips." How beneficent is our heavenly Father in this. "The depth of human science and learning can be explored by few, because few have either leisure or ability for learned investigations;" but the depths of Christian doctrine and experience are by the divine Spirit revealed to those who pray and meditate, and search the Scriptures: and experience enables them to speak with more truth and accuracy on the deceitfulness and depravity of the heart, the value of Christ, the life of the Christian, and the spiritual conflict, than any mere literature can possibly reach.

The more we enter into the spirit of practical writings, and can find joy in them, the more clear will be our evidence that our heart is right with God; and indeed in proportion as we advance in real piety shall we cordially love such reading. And while we are thus seeking not only to know but to do the will of God, we shall receive more and more of the enlightening beams of his Spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

The Study of Controversial Works.

Some are disposed to condemn at once all controversial studies as prejudicial and unprofitable; but it has pleased God to turn even opposition to his truth to good, and make it instrumental to the advancement of that which it was intended to overthrow.

The opposition of Job's severe friends, and the discussions between them, furnished the Church of God with that ancient book which is called by his name; and the opposition of Judaizers in Galatia stirred up the zealous Paul to write that fervent Epistle, of which we now reap the benefit. The enmity of Pagans and infidels has been the occasion of calling forth the most able defences of Christianity. The corruptions of Popery led to the full statement of Protestant doctrine; and the writings of the Socinians to the clearer developement of Evangelical truth.

There is a stagnant peace full of infection and death. Vehement contention for truth may be a duty, and consistent with love and the meekness of wisdom. Peaceful minds are often apt to condemn not so much those who resist the truth, as those who by testifying the truth, are the innocent occasion of controversy, and thus first disturb the general quiet. This is not however the true peace-making spirit which our Saviour blesses, but the love of carnal ease, and the very opposite to the spirit of the Gospel. Erasmus would thus have lost that Reformation, which Luther under God accomplished. There is a greater blessing than present quiet, even the maintenance of important truth, and millions will through eternity thank God for the holy boldness, decision, and courage of Luther. Indeed eager disputes about important religious truths are far better and far more hopeful than that total indifference which arises from infidelity.

There may indeed be a disproportionate attention to controversy, as well as a despising of it: if it be pursued to the neglect or prejudice of devotional and practical religion, if it be pursued with the passions of the natural and not with the graces of the spiritual man, it is disproportionately pursued. But because there is this mistake, there is a prevalent notion among those to whom we may justly give the blessed title of *peacemakers*, that the simple statement of truth is a sufficient confutation of error. Such forget the advantage that error has against truth in its falling in with the natural principles of the heart. Exposure of error and false statement, in a controversial form, is a prominent part of the Epistles to the unsettled churches. The duty of controversy under many circumstances which might be stated is perfectly clear. "We must earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

Yet while it has pleased our Heavenly Father thus to overrule some controversies for good, it is not all controversy that has done good, nor any in this fallen world that has done unmixed good. There have been controversies with comparatively little practical benefit, and with

deep injury to the spirit of those engaged in them. Mr. Howe remarks—

"It is little considered what is the true, the proper, and the right notion of the Christian Church, or the churches of Christ in general. They are hospitals, or rather one great hospital, wherein there are persons of all sorts under cure. There is none that is sound, none that is not diseased, none that has not wounds and sores about him. Now how unsufferable insolence were it, that in an hospital of maimed and diseased persons, one sick or wounded man should say, such a man's sores are so noisome to me that I am not able to endure the being neighbor to him.

Whenever evil passions have thus been displayed, on whatever side, it tends to the detriment of truth; "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Our answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us, should be given with meekness and fear; meekness towards him who opposes, and fear towards God, lest we should dishonour his cause. It is truly affecting to look back at the whole history of the Church, and see the differences and failings of good men. Paul and Barnabas, (Acts xv, 39;) Peter and Paul, (Gal. ii, 11—13,) in the days of the Apostles; Fathers against Fathers in the early days of the Church; Reformers against Reformers; Ridley and Hooper; the martyrs in prison and the exiles abroad in Mary's reign; in every age, how Satan has sought to divide, that he might destroy the Church; in every age, what confirmation do we thus receive of the fallen state of man!

Painfully depressing are some controversies; they either perplex the mind, and tend to raise doubts and unbelief; or, if our own mind be clear and fixed, yet is it no small sorrow to see multitudes, after all that can be said, wandering in irreclaimable error; to see some introducing ruinous errors, and bringing "on themselves swift destruction," with that additional sad effect of which St. Peter speaks, "Many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

Many also are misled by unscriptural sentiments, of which they never perhaps hear the sound and just refutation.

A powerful treatise taking an erroneous side of a question is read, and many are disposed to concur in it, till God graciously raises up a writer on the other side, who shows them how far the first has deviated from the truth. How often have we been reminded of that important truth, "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." Prov. xviii, 17. And yet from all good writers we get scintillations of truth: in the Bible only it is unmixed.

The book of Job, already referred to, furnishes a true specimen of the nature of controversy among religious men. How much is right, and how much is wrong in all! and God himself finally clears the matter, and humbles ALL, and glorifies himself.

In some cases, the subject itself is, in its various bearings, far above the human intellect. The Bible itself has informed us that the judgments of God are unsearchable, and his "ways past finding out;" we need not therefore be surprised if there are mysteries and things beyond our utmost reach of mind.

The very obscurity and darkness of divine mysteries is not without instruction. Dr. Owen observes, "What we call darkness in divine subjects is nothing else than their celestial glory and splendor striking on the weak ball of our eyes, the rays of which we are not able in this life to bear. It is owing to the nature of the doctrines themselves, and their exceeding splendor, that there are some things hard to be conceived and interpreted, and which surpass our capacity and comprehension." How calculated is this to give us just views of our own darkness, ignorance, and insufficiency! The wisest man thought himself "but a little child, who knew not how to go out or come in;" (1 Kings iii, 7.) and the expression of his humility was especially honoured and commended of God.

The circumstances of our situation will very much point out the line of our duty as to the study of particular controversies. If placed among, and in con-

tact with *Infidels* and *Deists*, we ought to be acquainted with the just answers to their cavils, and for this purpose must study the evidences.

But here let us bear in mind that Christianity is its own witness. Let our religion have at least the strong corroborating testimony of pure affections and holy tempers and heavenly conduct in the life; and this testimony, though silent, shall speak more irresistibly than many arguments. Let Christianity be exhibited in that rich combination of blessings which its doctrines make known to us; and not merely in eloquence of words, or in the chilling and didactic statement, which may display our talent, may interest the intellect, may even convince the understanding,and still leave the heart unimpressed. One of the main pillars of evidence for the gospel is, the influence of its doctrines on the lives of its professors and advocates. The cause is much weakened when the defenders of the faith do not present to their opponents the exhibition of the power and holiness of the faith. It is not always that the dignified advocate and the humble disciple combine. Has it not sometimes occurred, that the infidel is confuted by the nominal Christian,—himself without that genuine "faith which worketh by love?"

It is most important that Christians should be intelligent on the grounds of their own faith. Some are so satisfied with the grounds and strength of their convictions, as to deem any extensive attention to the subject a misapplication of time and interest. But on a subject so extensive in itself, and so momentously connected with our present happiness and our eternal prospects, it may be questioned whether the best informed among us have not need of farther information and consideration. At a time when new objections are continually forged, or at least old objections presented in a new and specious form, it becomes every one to remember the old reproach, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." (1 Kings xx, 11.) It is probable that many who are confident in the sincerity of their assurance have never been exposed to some of those assaults of the wicked one which, by their daring impiety, have sometimes ruffled the calm even of well-established Christians. The habit of dependence upon the Spirit for the increase and preservation of our faith, must ever be combined with a diligent improvement of all means conducive to their most important ends.

The barrenness or the fruitfulness of this study depends evidently upon the readiness and simplicity of our spirit, in making a practical and immediate application of the facts, whose credibility is thus established, to our own case. What, for instance, is the natural result of a sincere inquiry and insight into the state of the world, brought before his view by the Christian system, and the marks of guilt and fall that every where are visible, &c.? Humiliation, anxiety of spirit, earnest desire for forgiveness and renovation of heart! Treatises on evidence, if they were generally directed to practical inquiry, would be far more interesting, useful, and satisfactory.

The use also of this spirit is equally obvious in the offensive as in the defensive war with the infidel. Direct arguments against his heart and conscience, grounded of course on credible testimony, would be irresistible. There, and not in the intellect, is the disease. Convince him of sin, there is an end of his infidelity, root and branch. There is more accuracy and depth in two verses of our Lord, (John iii, 19, 20,) as developing the root of the evil, than in whole volumes that have been coldly written with satisfactory speculative evidence of the truth.*

Again, if I be placed in immediate contact with *Roman Catholics*, I ought to study that controversy. They have many subtle arguments to plead, such as universality, antiquity, and unity. To expose their sophistry, and satisfy inquiring minds, requires information, and calls for reading.

Popery is indeed the more dangerous, from its "*mystery of iniquity*," "*its de-*

* Fuller, in his Gospel its own witness, has pursued this train of argument, and made the infidel feel the point of the two-edged sword.

ceivableness of unrighteousness;" and the intoxicating nature of its doctrines. (Rev. xvii, 2.) It holds so much of the truth, and yet undermines or neutralizes every truth which it holds. It unites the most opposite materials, and confederates with infidelity itself "against the Lord, and against his Christ." It adapts itself to all ages and all intellects, and all circumstances, and has as its chief ally the fallen heart of every human being. Those under its influence should be objects, not of our liberality, but of our tenderest compassion, of our most fervent prayers, and of our unwearied efforts; that they may "come out and be separate," and not partake either of its sins, or of its plagues.

In attacking Popery, we mistake if we merely speak against its cruelties, its tyranny, and its despotism; multitudes will join us here who care nothing for the great truths of Christianity. But all the real good that is done, is to be done by dwelling on the great truths of the Gospel, especially free justification, and by exposing Popery in its false doctrine, its enormous errors, its setting aside Christ and his salvation, and its ruining the soul. Thus Luther and the Reformers shook the very foundations of the modern Babylon. The confessors of the true faith triumph "by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony."

Protestants in general may bear in mind, that a thorough acquaintance with history on the one hand, and the word of prophecy on the other, are great helps to preserve men from this evil; and the Protestant minister will generaly find, that if his people are well instructed in the principles of our faith, and from pastoral intercourse with him, really love their pastor, that they are not in much danger of being seduced into this destructive heresy.

If called to actual controversy, let us not engage in it without study or prayer. Let us read on the subject, and become well acquainted with it before we enter into any discussion, and let us not suffer ourselves to be led away from the word of God, and its paramount authority, and its vital doctrines.*

But let me contend in the spirit of love, sympathy, and kindness; or I shall only provoke and harden. With regard to them, and indeed to all others, our work as Christians is calmly and charitably, meekly and in the fear of God, wisely and firmly, patiently and constantly, to bear witness to the truth. The work of conversion is the Lord's; but he gives his grace with the testimony to the truth. Here, again, the experience of the truth and its real blessedness will give its defenders the main advantage.

Or I may be situated among *Socinians*, who are actively disseminating tenets derogatory to the divine glory of the Redeemer. There is much that flatters human wisdom in their system, and there have been those who have made considerable acquirements in criticism who have held it. It is necessary to be able, in such a case, to show that they totally fail of establishing their principles, on all just interpretations of Scripture, on just views of the divine attributes and of the moral wants of man; and we need not add, what valuable helps there are in books, to enable us to manifest all this.

It is to be feared, however, that the

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* Books (chiefly recommended by a friend) to furnish Protestants with suitable information on Popery.

Cheap Tracts.

Andrew Dunn.
Hamilton's Tracts.
Fruits of Reading the Bible.
William's Popery Unmasked.
Difference between Protestantism and Popery, (Bristol Tract Society.)
Protestant Catechims, 253.—C. K. S.
Questions and Answers, 254.—C. K. S.
View of Articles of Protestant and Popish Faith.

Larger Manuals.

Book of Homilies.
Jewell's Apology.
Faber' Difficulties of Romanism.
Ouseley's Papal Novelties.
Porteus's Brief Confutation.
White's Internal Evidence.
Phillpott's Theological Letters.
Townsend's Accusations of History.
Grier's Answers to Milner.
" Epitome of Councils.

doctrine of the Trinity has suffered from its defenders as well as from its adversaries. The moment we attenpt to clear up a difficulty which the Scriptures have not cleared, that moment we abandon our only safe guide, and plunge into the darkness of error. Most persons, we think, will have found fewer difficulties in the Scriptural statements on this subject, though they attempt not to explain the mystery, than in any human writings. Yet the adversaries of the doctrine compelled the Church to the adoption of such a statement as the Athanasian Creed, to protect Christians from the sophistries of subtle and artful objectors. Humble and simple minds have found few difficulties in the reception of the Trinity. They take the practical and experimental view of the subject which is far more clear and satisfactory than the scholastic, systematic, speculative view of many orthodox statements, such as those of Waterland and others. It is never stated as a mere speculative dogma, however important, but in connexion with our own privileges and duties, as the objects of our faith and worship, (Matt. xxviii, 19,) as the source of all spiritual blessings, (2 Cor. xiii, 14, Rev. i, 4, 5,) as bearing their respective parts in the divine economy in every act of approach to God. Eph. ii, 18. We would not wholly decry human attempts to set forth the doctrine; yet the clearest scholastic exhibition is far inferior in distinctness to the simple experimental view which is developed in the believer's spiritual apprehension of the Gospel. We would not despise the light of a candle, though obscured with comparative dimness; but we would rather go to the sun for light, and we should justly expect to find not only a wide difference in the clearness of our views, but also in the vivifying effect resulting from them.*

Again, I may be surrounded with *Protestants of another communion*, who, differing from me in rites or in church government, are strenuously maintaining their own particular sentiments. If ignorant, I may be carried away by an air of novelty, and be deeply grieved, on gaining more information, at the injurious effects of precipitate steps, which I may have taken in my ignorance. If acquainted with the whole subject, I may be saved all the difficulties of changes, and maintain with consistency and steadiness, and yet with love and kindness that view which I judge to be more correct and Scriptural.

We say, with love and kindness; for in all differences between real Christians, not only is much to be said on every side, but each side is apt to magnify the importance of its own statement. We often lose sight, in those controversies which effect the externals of religion, of the fact that the kingdom which Christ came to establish is "a spiritual kingdom." Let this principle be firmly fixed in our minds. The contests that have done most mischief in the Church have either been about external circumstances or on speculative opinions. But external uniformity, whether in discipline or confession of doctrine, however desirable, is not the main thing in our religion, or what is most for the glory of Christ. Inward conformity of heart to the mind and will of Christ, manifested in meekness, humility, love, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, these things mark the subjects of Christ; and external things and right doctrines are important as they promote these.

However right a man may be in his sentiments on these outward things, if his spirit and temper be habitually contrary to the mind of Christ, he is not a subject of Christ's kingdom on earth, nor making advances to his heavenly kingdom.

Differences in opinion do not make so many different religions. All that hold the Head belong to the one body. Nothing can be more clear than St. Paul's statements in Rom. xiv, to show that there are inferior points, on which real Christians may have different views of their duty, and be led by those views to a different course of conduct, and yet both sides be living to the Lord, and ultimately die to the Lord. For ourselves, he shows that we should be fully persuaded in our own mind; and, as it regards others,

* Such a work as "Owen on Communion with God," gives the clearest view of this doctrine in its practical and experimental character.

we must neither despise, nor judge, nor walk uncharitably, but follow the things which make for peace and edification, bearing the infirmities of the weak, and not seeking to please ourselves, "receiving one another as Christ has received us to the glory of God," (Rom. xiv, and xv, 1—7.) How exquisitely beautiful is this spirit! O that it may be more and more given to us all!

But it is an affecting consideration, that the principal things which have divided Christians, have been those things on which the Sacred Scriptures have said little or nothing.

The controversy known under the terms of *Calvanism* and *Arminianism*, has divided men of all denominations, and has led to some bitter and painful results. We fear almost to touch upon it; and yet every Christian will, at one time or other, be called to the consideration of this subject; and it may be useful to hazard a statement in which it has been thought that all good men may concur. The solution of the main difficulties in this controversy is far beyond the highest human intellect, and many on both sides have departed from the exact line of scriptural truth. I may, as an individual, prefer in the main what are called Calvinistic or Arminian views, but I should be prejudiced not to see that both sides, in their eager defence of their respective systems, have erred.

The statements of some eminently holy men, three of them bishops of the British Churches, and the fourth the celebrated Boyle, may place this controversy in a juster light than any private observations, and may tend to the instruction and edification of those whose sincere aim it is to seek both truth and peace.

Bishop Davenant, in an excellent Treatise, "An Exhortation to Brotherly Love," says, "This one thing alone belongs to the catholic and fundamental faith—That the free grace of God, in predestinating miserable men, in conversion of sinners, in setting free of men's wills; lastly in perseverance and salvation of the elect, be so fully acknowledged; that whatsoever he does to the attaining of the state of grace or glory, or whatsoever is done by men in reference thereunto, *that* wholly be given to God and granted to God's special grace and mercy. On the other side, whatsoever pertains to the corruption of man's nature, whatsoever to his obstinacy in sin whatsoever to the viciousness and servitude of free will; lastly, whatsoever draws miserable mortals to damnation and tumbles them headlong into hell that we impute all this to ourselves and our own demerits, and command it distance, to be far off from God himself While these things remain fixed and immovable, (as indeed they do remain,) although in the doctrines built upon the foundation, they have divers manners of conceiving and forms of speaking; yea although they follow different opinions, such errors are not so deadly, that for their sakes a deadly hatred should be hatched, or that a perpetual schism ought to be nourished between the Churches."

On the very difficult subject, *the foreseen condemnation of the wicked*, Bishop Davenant says, "All the Reformed Churches agree—That the act of Reprobation in God, as that of election, is from eternity: that none is reprobated from eternity, which might not be reprobated without all cruelty and injustice: that no one was foredamned of God from eternity, whom he did not foresee wrapt up in the guilt of damnation: that no one shall in time be damned but through the most just merit of his own corruption and impiety: that the original and cause of all evil which drowns reprobates in perdition, is not found in God's reprobating, but in the reprobates themselves: that this eternal reprobation cannot appear to any particular person, unless out of the fruits most worthy of damnation, which he brings forth, and loves to bring forth, to the end of his life: that there is no single person which may not attain eternal life, by repenting, believing, and persevering, according to the tenor of the covenant of the Gospel: that there is no such decree of God, by which reprobates should be forced and necessitated to sin and perish; but always they perish by their own voluntary unbelief and impiety, free and not constrained."

The remarks of *Archbishop Leighton* are full of holy instruction. The excellent Archbishop says, "We may confidently assert that all those things which the great Creator produces in different periods of time were perfectly known to Him, and as it were present with him from eternity, and every thing that happens throughout the several ages of the world, proceeds in the same order, and the same precise manner, as the Eternal Mind at first intended it should....And according as all these things in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, are daily regulated and directed by the Eternal King, in the same precise manner were they from all eternity ordered and disposed by Him."

"These things we are warranted, and safe to believe: but what perverseness, or rather madness is it to break into the sacred repositories of heaven, and pretend to accommodate those secrets of the Divine Kingdom to the measures and methods of our weak capacities. To say the truth, I acknowledge that I am astonished, and greatly at a loss, when I hear learned men and professors of theology talking presumptuously about the order of the Divine Decrees, and when I read such things in their works. "Paul considering this subject," says Chrysostom, "as an immense sea, was astonished at it, and viewing the vast abyss, started back and cried out with a loud voice, *O the depth.*" Nor is there much more sobriety or moderation in the many notions that are entertained, and the disputes that are commonly raised about reconciling the Divine Decrees, with the liberty and free will of man.—The great difficulty is the origin of evil....an abyss never to be perfectly sounded by any plummet of human understanding."

He concludes the lecture with this direction; "Wherefore if you will take my advice, withdraw your minds from a curious search into this mystery, and turn them directly to a study of piety and a due reverence to the awful majesty of God. Think and speak of God and his secrets, with fear and trembling, but dispute very little about them; and if you would not undo yourselves, beware of disputing with him; if you transgress in any thing, blame yourselves; if you do any good, or repent of evil, offer thanksgiving to God."

Speaking on the "disobedient stumbling at the word—whereunto they were also appointed." 1 Peter ii, 8. Leighton says, "The secret purpose of God is accomplished in his having determined to glorify his justice on impenitent sinners, as he shows his rich mercy in them that believe. Here it were easier to lead you into a deep, than to lead you forth again. I will rather stand on the shore and silently admire it, than enter into it. This is certain, that the thoughts of God are all no less just in themselves than deep and unsoundable by us. His justice is always clear, in that man's destruction is always the fruit of his own sin: but to give causes of God's decrees without himself, is neither agreeable with the primitive being of the nature of God, nor with the doctrine of the Scriptures. This is sure, that God is not bound to give further account of those things, and we are not bound to ask it. Let those two words, as St. Augustine says, answer all "What art thou O man?" Rom. ix, 20. And "O the depth." Rom. xi 33. Our only sure way to know that our names are not in that black line, and to be persuaded that he has chosen us to be saved by his Son, is this, to find that we have chosen him, and are built on him by faith, which is the fruit of his love that chooses us; and that we may read in our esteem of him."

Another eminent prelate, *Bishop Hall*, wrote an excellent Treatise entitled the way of Peace "to pick out what might sound towards concord." He sums up his view of Predestination as follows:

"Whatsoever God, who is a God of truth, hath engaged himself by promise to do, the same he undoubtedly hath willed, and will accordingly perform.

"There is no son of Adam to whom God hath not promised, that if he shall believe in Christ, repent, and persevere, he shall be saved.

"This general and undoubted will of God must be equally proclaimed to all men throughout the world without ex-

ception, and ought to be so received and believed as it is by him published and revealed.

"All men, within the pale of the Church especially, have from the mercy of God such common helps toward this belief and salvation, that the neglect thereof makes any of them justly guilty of their own condemnation.

"Besides the general will of God, he hath eternally willed and decreed to give a special and effectual grace to those that are predestinate according to the good pleasure of his will, whereby they do actually believe, obey, and persevere, that they may be saved: so as the same God that would have all men to be saved, if they believe and be not wanting to his Spirit, hath decreed to work powerfully in some whom he hath particularly chosen, that they shall believe and not be wanting to his Spirit in whatsoever shall be necessary to their salvation.

"It is not the provision of faith or any other grace or act of man, whereupon this decree of God is grounded, but the mere and gracious good will and pleasure of God from all eternity, appointing to save those whom he hath chosen in Christ as the Head and foundation of the elect.

"This decree of God's election is absolute and unchangeable, and from everlasting.

"God doth not either actually damn, or appoint any soul to damnation, without the consideration and respect of sin."

Very similar are the remarks of the Hon. *Robert Boyle*. In his Treatise on Seraphic Love, speaking of the Calvinists and Remonstrants, he has these healing remarks. "Those that are pious of either party are perhaps otherwise looked on by God than one another, as contending which of God's attributes should be most respected; the one seeming to affirm irrespective degrees to magnify his goodness, and the other to deny them but to secure the credit of his justice. And even in honoring the same attribute, his goodness, these adversaries seem rivals, the one party supposing it best celebrated by believing it so irresistible, that to whomsoever it is intended, he cannot but be happy; and the other thinking it the most extolled by being believed so universal, that it will make every man happy if he pleases. The one party electing to honor *free grace*, by assigning it as to man an unlimitedly vast extent, as the other does by ascribing it to an infallibly victorious degree."*

It is the more important to give these testimonies, because of the indistinct and unsatisfactory manner in which this subject has often been treated in pulpits, and even in books, and the unjust obloquy cast upon those who only held the doctrines of the Reformation.

Bishop Horsley, speaking of modern writers not distinguishing that which is peculiar to Calvinism, and that which belongs to our common Christianity, and the general faith of the reformed churches, says, "I must say, that I have found great want of this discrimination in some late controversial writings on the side of the church, as they were meant to be against the Methodists; the authors of which have acquired much applause, but with so little real knowledge of their subject, that, give me the principles on which these writers argue, and I will undertake to convict, I will not say Arminius only, and Archbishop Laud, but upon these principles I will undertake to convict the Fathers of the Council of Trent of Calvinism. So closely is a great part of that which is now ignorantly called Calvinism, interwoven with the very rudiments of Christianity.

It is however a grand error to main-

* Boyle's Seraphic Love, 104.—In a letter to Mr. Dury printed in his Life, he says, "It has long been my grief, as well as my wonder, to see such comparatively petty differences in judgment make such wide breaches and vast divisions in affection. It is strange that men should rather be quarrelling for a few trifling opinions, wherein they dissent, than to embrace one another for those many fundamental truths wherein they agree. For my own part, in some two or three and forty months which I spent in the very town of Geneva, as I never found that people discontented with their own Church Government, (the gallingness of whose yoke is the grand scarecrow that frights us here,) so could I never observe in it any such transcendent excellency as could oblige me either to bolt heaven against, or open Newgate for, all those that believe they may be saved under another."

tain the doctrines of grace merely as a matter of controversy, and to obtain a victory over an adversary. This is sure to raise all the opposition of the carnal mind. They are matters of experience; they are exhibited in the Scriptures as blessings; they are not revealed to be disputed about, but to be received, to be testified, to be used, and to be enjoyed; and nothing can be more inconsistent than any thing like assumption of superior understanding, harshness, or bitterness of spirit, manifested by those who profess to hold these doctrines towards those who hold them not. If we are eminent for professing—"what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Surely pity, help and kindness, love and sympathy are due to those whom we believe not yet to have received; but who may yet receive far higher grace than we have obtained;—if by unbelief they at present are broken off, how obvious and important the lesson —"thou standest by faith, be not high-minded, but fear."

These things have ever been controverted.—After alluding to the controversies of the Jansenists and Molinists, the late Mr. Pearson says, "If to these be added the names of Thomas Aquinas, Bradwardine, Baxter, Bayle, Hobbes, Bramhall, Crousaz, Placette, Leibnitz, Jurieu, Bossuet, Locke, Collins, Clarke, Butler, Jonathan Edwards, Reid, &c. men of comprehensive intellect, deep penetration, superior powers of reading, and unwearied diligence; if men, gifted as these have been, were found unequal to the task of clearing away the difficulties, and dispelling the shades which incumber and darken the subject of human liberty and divine influence, a lesson of modesty and humility, at least, is bequeathed to those who may be tempted to resolve the questions with little distrust of their own sufficiency."

The Author would venture to add a few remarks in favor of such a view of election as he conceives to be taken in the Seventeenth Article of his Church, an article which he believes to be framed with peculiar Christian wisdom, and which he does most unfeignedly and cordially receive.

Personal election by no means implies the rejection of such truths as Christ's dying for all—God's loving the world—and not wishing the death of a sinner. These are indubitable verities, revealed for the unspeakable consolation of sinful creatures, and to be freely proclaimed, unfettered by any artificial systems, to the whole human race—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The promises of God are to be *generally* proposed, and *ought* to be received by all. It greatly aggravates guilt when any reject them; if they do reject them, it is entirely their own fault; but if they receive them, it is entirely from the grace of God. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." Here is enough general truth to unite us as fellow-christians in seeking to save, first our own souls, and then the souls of our fellow-creatures through the world. Things beyond this have little light thrown on them to gratify curiosity, and are chiefly hid in the unfathomable depth of the Divine mind, wholly inscrutable to the narrower range of human reason.

Objections to election, as in itself tending to careless living, are wholly groundless, as groundless as to suppose such objections from the very opposite view; for no one holds that God's people are elect unto sin; all who hold election in any way for which we would plead, hold it as the beginning and cause of holiness; and that obedience inseparably follows; so inseparably, that it is the very proof that we are elect: and that, were the most eminent Christians to begin willfully to walk carelessly and neglectfully, or to live in allowed sin, we could not then view him as elect; he then would have just reason to fear, after all his works, that he was *a castaway*. 1 Cor. ix, 27, and Ezek. xviii. Look at the lives of those men who have been most eminent in pleading for it; look at the Churches of Christ where it is held most distinctly; and we confidently affirm, that facts and experience will testify that such men and such churches are not behind any others in strict and holy living. Will it not be sometimes found, that their strictness of life has been as offensive as their principles of religion? Orton, who was far from

being a Calvinist, candidly admits, that he had long observed that those holding such sentiments were in general more serious and active in their ministry, and those of freer principles more indolent and languid; and that he had met with but few exceptions.

The doctrine is useful in the ministry of the gospel, and in the experience of the Christian, chiefly because it altogether excludes the notions of salvation, otherwise than by the free favor of God, and tends to give us richer and fuller views of His infinite wisdom, love, and divine glory, and of the security, holiness, and happiness of his people. The explanations of texts relating to it which some give, do not really remove the objections which they suppose.—One is, that election is only of nations to external religious privileges; but election is in the New Testament connected with consequent holiness and obedience, (Eph. i, 4; 2 Thess. ii, 13, 14, and 1 Peter i, 1, 2.) which, alas! we have not hitherto seen in nations; and if salvation be connected with plentitude of means of grace—and who will deny this?—then does the supposed objection of partiality, which this explanation is intended to remove, apply as strongly to national as to personal election. Another is, that election is on account of foreseen faith and holiness; then, as no whole nation has faith and holiness, it cannot be national election; and as faith and holiness are allowed to be from grace, it is no removal of the objection of partiality. But the Scripture phrase is of another character, and is, that we are chosen not *for* holiness, but *unto* holiness. God cannot be partial so as to be unjust, and what fallen sinner can with truth open his mouth against the Divine Justice? But God may be, and is, sovereign and free in the disposal of his favors and blessings, and what saint will not magnify supremely his grace?

On reprobation, as *the supposed opposite* to, and deduction from predestination, we have nothing to offer but our ignorance where Scripture has not made things clear. God's rejecting the wicked is in no respect materially different from their final judgment and condemnation, on account of their sins; and wherever stated, so as to impugn divine equity, it is wholly unscriptural. We speak of the *supposed* opposite to predestination or deduction from it; it is in reality merely supposed, though both the opposition and the deduction seem unavoidable upon logical principles; but the most logical inference, unsupported by plain Scripture, can never be received as an article of faith. If it be true, it must rest upon revelation, not upon logic. And surely, upon consideration, most persons will allow that reprobation in its offensive meaning, as the opposite of predestination, rests more upon logical deduction than Scripture revelation.

The real opposite to *elect* in the Scripture is, not *reprobate*, but *the world*, *the rest*. The term reprobate is not used with reference to the final condition of men in eternity, but with reference to disapprobation either of God or man in time, so that a sinner may by his open wickedness be manifestly reprobate in the scriptural meaning of the word, and yet afterwards by his conversion to God be manifested to be one of his children.

There is in the passage where the apostle speaks on this deep mystery, a remarkable difference in the mode of his expression as to those who are rejected and those who are saved; one is the enduring "with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted (or made up) to destruction," where the whole fault or cause of ruin rests manifestly on the rejected; the other, as to "vessels of mercy which *he* had afore prepared unto glory," does also most clearly and manifestly ascribe all their salvation to his boundless grace. Here is quite enough truth to satisfy the mind, till the light of glory unveils every mystery. But there is one sentiment especially awakening, that the present delay of punishment as to the wicked, is only in the result "to show his wrath and make his power known." O let us then without delay "flee from the wrath to come. Have we not been disputing about doctrines, till we have almost lost the plain and holy lessons which the words first obviously teach? If these were matters of reason, we might perhaps expect to attain to a full comprehension of them in all their relative con-

nexions and seeming contrarieties. But are they not matters of faith belonging to the character of God? Where would be the room for faith, if there was that perfect comprehension that would explain every difficulty, and harmonize to the eye of man every apparent contradiction? Nothing more plainly shows the imperfect view that either side have attained, than that each are pressed with inferences logically deducted, and yet which the advocates of each view are constrained to disavow. This is forcibly put (though more unction and devotion might be desired in the mode of statement) by Faber, in his Sermon on the Predestinarian Controversy.*

Let every student then beware of intruding into those things which no man hath seen or can see. O the grievous rashness of expression and dogmatism of even holy men on these subjects! We are perfectly ignorant of the turning point in the controversy; nor have any human writings, which the author has seen, solved all the difficulties of the union of those two points which Christians believe to be equally true, man's salvation in all its parts entirely of grace, man's destruction wholly of himself. The Scriptures and the Calvinists with them do say many delightful things to illustrate the former; and the Scriptures and the Arminians with them do say many important truths to illustrate the latter; and all sound men on both sides earnestly press both points; but after all, though God will be clear when he judges, the mystery is insolvable; God has now left this difficulty, that man's proud intellect might be humbled, and in its humiliation accept in a right spirit the only remedy. But God has withal implanted a conscience of right and wrong in every man's bosom, which shows him his guilt in all sin, and with a constant voice, till seared by habitual transgression, forbids every iniquity, and calls him to every duty.

All who have looked into the Calvinistic Controversy will feel that the over refinements of Calvinism, and the attempting to make every part clear and consistent, and statements beyond the Scriptures, have been some of the principal stumbling-blocks in the way of the reception of that in Calvinism which was scriptural truth. We must humble ourselves before God; we cannot wholly account for the entrance of sin, we cannot fathom the divine mind, we cannot scrutinize, and justly reason about, the mode of God's operations. We only betray our pride and folly when we attempt to do so. We are blind, and dark, and short-sighted worms, and know not a hair's breadth beyond the plain letter of Scripture.

Making every allowance for the senti-

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* Mr. Simeon has, in a note to the Preface to his Skeletons, happily stated some common grounds, in which Calvinists and Arminians may agree, in a conversation which occurred between himself and Mr. Wesley, as follows—

"A young minister, about three or four years after he was ordained, had an opportunity of conversing familiarly with the great and venerable leader of the Arminians in this kingdom, and wishing to improve the occasion to the uttermost, he addressed him nearly in the following words:—'Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian, I have been sometimes called a Calvinist, and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers; but before I consent to begin the combat, with your permision, I will ask you a few questions, not from impertinent curiosity, but for real instruction.' Permission being very readily and kindly granted, the young minister proceeded to ask—'Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?' 'Yes,' says the veteran, 'I do indeed.' 'And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by any thing that you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?'—'Yes, solely through Christ.'—'But, Sir, suppose you were at first saved by Christ, are you not, somehow or other, to save yourself afterwards, by your own works?'—'No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.' 'Allowing then that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to help yourself by your own power?'—'No.'—'What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?'—'Yes, altogether.'—'And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God, to preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom?'—'Yes, I have no hope but in him.'—'Then, Sir, with your leave, I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance; it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it, and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.'"

ments of others who differ from him, and every admission of the excess of the opposite views which he conscientiously could; he would give the fullest credit for piety and sincerity to those who may come to a different conclusion, and desires to walk with them in holy love. Phil. iii, 15, 16. But for himself he would add, he could not refuse to receive the doctrines as he has here stated them, without feeling that he had not arrived at the simplicity of entire submission of mind to the Holy Scripture, or at that full integrity of heart in which he wishes every sentiment of his mind to be moulded, according to the plain unfettered meaning of God's word. According to his present knowledge, he could not come to other conclusions, without what would be to him evasions of its meaning, and the exaltation of his own wisdom above the divine wisdom. Others of opposite views will doubtless feel the same; let us then walk in love, and seek not the exaltation of human wisdom, but to magnify Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom." Let us be most anxious in every discussion, to cultivate that state of mind in which we wish to be found in our last moments. We would not then be dealing angry blows towards those fellow-servants who had gone farthest from understanding their master's will. Admirable are the Christian sentiments of Bradford, addressed "to certain men not rightly persuaded in the most true, comfortable, and necessary doctrine of God's holy election and predestination." Just before his martyrdom, after praying that there may be no breach of love, nor suspicion among them, he says, "I am persuaded of you that you fear the Lord, and therefore I love you, and have loved you in him, (my dear hearts,) though otherways you have taken it, without cause given on my part so far as I know.—Now I am going before you to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father, to my Christ and your Christ, to my home and your home. I go before, but you shall come after sooner or later." He concludes another letter—"Though in some things we agree not, yet let love bear the bell away, and let us one pray for another, and be careful one for another, for I hope we be all Christ's. As you hope yourselves to pertain to him, so think of me, and as you be his, so am I yours."

Indeed one of the comforts of God's best servants in their last moments has been the blessed assurance of freedom from all controversy in heaven. Thus Melancthon, a short time before his death, wrote down these as reasons for being willing to die, that he should be released from the fierce contentions of polemics, and learn those hidden mysteries which he could not in his life comprehend. Strigelius breathed out his soul to God in similar sentiments.

Having given these general hints on particular controversies, we will now add some practical directions on the subject.

If compelled to pursue controversial studies, and drawn out into controversy, *watch against its many evils.*

The unhappiness of controversy is, that human passions are roused by it; and when once the matter is passed into the affections, a sound judgment is lost; our own honour, however much God's is pretended, becomes the real object of contention. We love so much our own conceits and inventions, especially when we have once publicly avowed them, others admire them, and our wisdom seems committed in them, that no strength of argument shown by others will induce us to give them up. Few of the parties, once fairly engaged in the controversy, ever change their mind. We forget that the spirit of Christian love wins far more than the keenness and acuteness of polemics. But let us fear lest we bring disputations, disunions, and bitterness among fellow Christians, and ruin millions of immortal souls, by seeking ourselves, under the vain pretence of seeking God and his glory. It is well observed by Jackson, "To love our own wills is an impotency natural to all; and we love them the better, at least more strongly, when we perceive them set on that which is itself good. Whence it is that our desires of doing many things which are good and commendable often draw us to use means not so commendable for their accomplishment."

We would particularly caution young

Christians not to begin with controversy, and perplex themselves with deep mysteries; this would be much to their loss and hindrance, by diverting their mind from the grand essentials of the Gospel. All habits increase by practice and exercise; and therefore another of the dangers of controversy is a love of controversy, which is usually attended with much if not total blindness to the dangers consequent upon it.

Watch against strong and rash expressions: they often do much mischief. Hardly any good man but has in some point, fallen into such mistakes, and then his mistakes have been used as a weapon against divine truth, perfectly contrary to the main sentiments of the writer. When contending against a particular error, men are apt to look only at that, and in guarding against it, fall into the opposite error. God has not always in one place, fully expressed his truth, but in the whole Scriptures he guides us to just views, and guards us against every error connected with that truth. Against the self-righteous how plain is Paul; against the licentious how express is James. Manton observes, "The Scripture has so poised and contempered all doctrines and expressions, that it might wisely prevent mistakes and errors on every hand, and that sentences might not be violently urged apart, but measured by the proportion of faith."

Some become so attached to individuals, or so prejudiced against them, that they will approve or not approve the very same sentiments, just according as they are uttered by different persons. Others totally misname things, and call divine grace, Antinomianism; or the unquestionable truth of man's moral responsibility, Pelagianism. We are all too eager for our own particular notions. One observes, "The greatest humility becomes us in speaking of what is our own. When grievous wolves creep in, they spare not the flock, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. I scarce ever knew an author who had a nostrum in divinity, a contrivance of his own, but he was more impatient for that, than the great fundamentals of Christianity. He could argue against the man who denies the truth, with more temper, than against one who is afraid of his scheme."

There is particular danger in the tendency to over estimate and exaggerate the importance of a controverted doctrine, so as to set it above all others. "Great," says Davenant, "is the unhappiness of Christians, where, by reason of the noise and overmuch heat of controversies, they have scarcely leave or leisure to hear or think of the fundamental and saving doctrine of the Scriptures, and not at all to do those deeds most necessarily required by God's commandments."

O the misery of man! that, through the pride of his fallen heart he is more desirous of the praise of knowledge, than of the attainments of real holiness; and is more engaged in quarrelling with those who dispute his sentiments, than with those living in sin, or than in striving to spread love, humility and piety.

Such are some of the many dangers of controversy. We are all seeking distinction and the honor that comes from man, and here is an endless source of contention. "Only by pride cometh contention."

Carefully *avoid a mere war of words*. It is St. Paul's solemn direction to Timothy, to charge his hearers "before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." The history of controversies is an awful comment on this direction. How many have been subverted by the contentions of real Christians! How many controversies have come to a mere war of words! Werenfel's Treatise on Logomachies and Baxter's Catholic Theology afford abundant specimens of this sad effect, and this waste of Christian strength. It arises from that pride of heart which seeks its own glory, and is followed by innumerable evils. "If any man.....consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse

disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself." Erasmus, in the Preface to Hilary's Works, says, "The doctrine of Christ, which at the first was free from strife of words, began to depend on the defences of philosophy; this was the first degree of the Church's declension to the worse." But while there are these solemn cautions against a war of words, we must not interpret them so as to be indifferent to the form of sound words; for there is, in the very same Epistle, a direction to "hold fast the form of sound words."

Beware of *taking an opponent's description, or his inferences, as giving the just view of the opinion which he opposes.* We first misunderstand an opponent, and then misrepresent him, and nothing kindles more strife and enmity. What misrepresentations are there on all sides. Bishop Hall says, "Let a man believe Andrew Jurgivicus, he will think the Protestants hold no one article of the Apostles' creed. Let him believe Campian, he shall think we hold God to be the Author of sin; that the Mediator between God and man, Jesus, died the second death; that all sins are equal, and many more of the same brand. If he shall believe Cardinal Bellarmine, he shall condemn Erasmus as a patron of Arians; Luther as an enemy to the Holy Trinity, and to the consubstantiality of the Son of God; Melancthon and Scheckius as favourers of the Tritheists; Calvin as an advocate of the Samosatenians; Bullinger of Arianism; Beza of Nestorianism. If he will believe our countryman Gifford, he shall think Calvin's doctrine in many things worse than the Koran. Ill-will never said, Well, God forbid that the same man should be in the same case accuser, witness, and judge." Nor must we charge our opponent with the consequences which we think may be justly inferred, when he positively denies those consequences. Bucer remarks, "It is our part to see not what does of itself follow upon any opinion, but what follows in the conscience of those who hold that opinion, which we think contrary to a fundamental article."

Be *cautious of asserting opinions* on a difficult and obscure doctrine *till you have read both sides.* The most important doctrines are so clear and distinct, that like the sun they are manifest by their own light; such as the sin and ruin of man, salvation by Jesus Christ, the divine glory of his person, and the freedom of his grace, faith in him, adoption by his Spirit, the necessity of holiness, and the certain and final condemnation of every unbeliever. To read controversies which would seek to set aside these points, is like reading an elaborate proof that two and two make five. Life is too short, and its work too important to be trifled away. But there are other points where good men have differed, and which yet are of considerable importance. Many books might have been spared; many erroneous statements would never have appeared; much serious division and contention might have been prevented, had persons known the whole of a controversy before they publicly avowed their sentiments. When once committed by the statement of an opinion, we shrink from the humiliation of retraction, and so error is perpetuated. We would not recommend much study of controversial works, thinking it prejudicial; but if you read Whitby on the five points, read Dr. Gill's reply; Dr. Crisp's sermons led to Daniel Williams's Gospel Truth; if you read that, read also Chauncey's Neonomianism Unmasked; Neale's History of the Puritans, should be studied with Bishop Madox's Vindication; Goodwin's Redemption, with Kendall's and Owen's Replies; Toplady's Historic Defence, with Nicholl's Calvinism and Arminianism; Bishop Mant on Baptismal Regeneration, with Scott's or Biddulph's Reply. From the beginning, in order that we should call no man master, it has pleased God to permit mistakes by good men, even in most useful treatises. Anselm observes even in his day, "In the books of holy teachers, which the Church reads as authentic, things corrupt and heretical are sometimes found, but the books and authors are not to be condemned for this." We have seen similar defects in human writings in our day. Take, for instance, Hervey's

Theron and Aspasio. Few books have been so useful, yet, like every human writing, it is not free from error; though substantially right, are not hope and assurance sometimes confounded with faith? Bellamy writes his Dialogues with some asperity, but with talent and piety to point out what he thought erroneous; but he mistakes Hervey, and makes needless difficulties in the way of the sinner's return to God. Mr. Scott, in his Warrant of Faith, shows this: it is a valuable tract; but after all, with a few exceptions, the clear statements of divine truth in Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, and his Christian addresses, full of kindness and affection, gentleness and sweetness of spirit, draw out your best feelings and win you over to evangelical principles. It is an advantage, however, to compare such writers and read them together. A person who reads both sides, comparing all with the Scriptures, and with a heart anxious only after scriptural truth, may derive great instruction from each side. Let us endeavour to find out, and guard against our constitutional or acquired prejudices which arise chiefly from our limited and contracted views.* Do not, however, yield to party feelings; the parties engaged have a natural tendency to become special pleaders for their own views, and to be so filled with a sense of the danger of one extreme as to fly to another. Ordinarily the truth is revealed but in part to any. How valuable then are the Scriptures where all is simple truth!

Beware of *artificial systems of divinity*. That the Scripture contains an harmonious system, and that there is connexion, and dependance, and proportion, of the several parts of truth is unquestionable. But to discern this system clearly in every component part, requires an eye perfectly single, without a dark spot of sin, or prejudiced reasoning of any kind. It is also unquestionable, that a full and clear statement gathered from all parts of Scripture is advantageous; but implied consequences, where the Scripture has not stated those consequences, and artificial plans and arrangements of truth, may deprive us of the power and simplicity of truth, and even prejudice the mind of others against it. In this view, it appears to me that many excellent writers have gone too far in their distinctions. Let us keep to scriptural terms and ideas, and not be wise above what is written. Let us also not interpret figurative expressions too minutely. Where Scripture is plain and obvious, there is a clear ground of faith. Where it is ambiguous or intricate, suspend your judgment, neither affirm nor deny, but humble yourself before God and admire his majesty. Especially, seek not by human additions to make every part clear in your own system. That system which is more exact and clear than the Scriptures is so far false. We ought to be as fairly chargeable with inconsistency as the book of God. But we are often in study attending rather to the theory and science of theology, than to practical obedience, and the holy efficacy of scriptural truth. Some of the best Puritan writers fell into this fault of a too refined or artificial divinity. Dr. Owen was, as Mr. Cecil observes, too systematic.

Cultivate *a spirit of tender love towards all from whom you differ*. Anger is soon excited in a religious controversy, and nothing is more prejudicial to its happy termination. When the Archangel Michael had to contend with Satan, he had a good cause and the worst adversary; yet his pure and holy nature would not sully itself by angry words and railing accusation. Dr. Manton observed, "When tongue is sharpened against tongue, and pen against pen, what follows? Nothing but mutual animosities and hatred, whereby, if we gain aught of truth, we lose much of love and goodness.....Those engage most successfully that use the hardest arguments and the softest words; whereas railings and revilings, as they are without love, so are they without profit." I admire the words of Augustine to the sceptics of his age. He says, "Let those rage against you who know not with what labour truth is found, and how hard it is to avoid errors; who know not with what difficulty the eye of the interior man is healed, who know not

* See some excellent remarks in Cecil's Remains, on judging justly.

with what groans and sighs we get to understand the very least of God." This spirit of love is of vast importance, and even good men have failed in this respect.—Bishop Davenant, speaking of the controversies in Holland, says, "I doubt not to affirm that those Doctors among the Dutch churches which are deceived, and yet are ready to retain brotherly communion with others, are held more excused from schism before God, than they who maintain the true opinion in these controversies, and in the mean time disdain to hold brotherly communion with other churches desiring the same."

It is a hard, and, I trust, a generally unmerited censure which Orton brought against faithful clergymen; but even a false charge may teach a true lesson. He says, "Those who, I hope, are truly serious and concerned to do good, are frequently great bigots to the Church, and very uncharitable in their sentiments, and will secretly undermine the reputation of a dissenting minister if they can, when they find he is not as narrow and rigid as themselves." It was the observation of Mede, in a day when he had full opportunity for ascertaining the fact, "A man that has once drawn blood in controversy, is seldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards."

How beautiful, on the other hand, is that spirit which returns kindness, for unkindness, and instead of railing gives a blessing. Thus did Augustine towards his opponents. Thus did Calvin, in a letter to Bullinger, highly commending Luther, who had abused him. He says, "I am often accustomed to say that if he should call me a devil, yet I will still honour and acknowledge him as an eminent servant of God." In later times, both Hooker and Scott have afforded a beautiful specimen of the mode in which controversy should be conducted.

How little have stronger Christians acted on the direction, "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Supposing our views to be correct, why should we despise others (Matt. xviii, 10,) as unworthy of our affection and communion, for some weakness in their understanding? How little love there is in this scorn and disdain of those whom we think to be in the wrong! Let us melt in pity and tenderness on their behalf: it will often do far more for union and edification than "depth of learning, knowledge of antiquity, authority of councils, sharpness of wit, and the name of Church," and all those things to which we attach the most weight. Hard names serve only to exasperate: harshly judging others leads them harshly to judge us. Christ's rule is, "judge not." The moralist condemns the doctrinalist for enthusiasm and antinomianism, and is in his turn condemned for subverting the Gospel. Churchmen and dissenters rail against each other.* The lukewarm man accus-

* These things are seen in their true light in a dying hour. Lewis Du Moulin had in his life-time published various violent and bitter things against Churchmen. But on his death-bed he had the piety and integrity to sign the following recantation: "As for my books, in which I mixed many personal reflections, I am now sensible I mixed too much of my own passions and bitterness; and therefore I disclaim all that is personal in them, and am heartily sorry for every thing I have written to the defaming of any person. I humbly beg God, and all those I have so wronged, pardon, for Jesus Christ's sake: and am resolved, if God shall spare my life, never to meddle more with such personal things; and do earnestly exhort all people, as a dying man, that they will study more love and mutual forbearance in their differences, and will avoid all bitter and uncharitable reflections. And as I pray those worthy men of the Church of England to have charity and tenderness for the dissenters from them; so I beg of the dissenters, that they would have a due regard and respect to those of the Church of England; of many of whom I now say, let my soul be with theirs; and that all true Protestants may heartily unite and concur in the defence and preservation of the holy reformed religion, now by the mercy of God settled among us. And that men of all sides may, according to St. Paul's rule, cease to bite and devour one another, lest we be destroyed one of another: and that whereunto we have already attained we may walk by the same rule, hoping that if any man is otherwise minded in some lesser things, God shall either reveal that to him, or mercifully forgive it, through Jesus Christ, into whose hands I commend my spirit, and desire to appear before God in and through him who gave himself for me, and therefore do now study to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart, and to love all the brethren as he loved me.

Oct. 5, 1680. Lewis du Moulin."

es the zealous of pride and making a party, and he, in his turn, is charged with lukewarmness and spiritual death; and love mourns and sighs over all. One word spoken in love would often do more than a thousand words of hard censure, or volumes of controversy.

It may promote this spirit of love ever to remember our own natural blindness, our obligations to divine grace, and our limited knowledge at best. Human judgment on divine things is formed from the divine light imparted to us, and according to evidence that comes before us. We cannot discern the whole, perhaps, of any case. However sound, therefore, our judgment may be before our fellow-creatures, it is at the best very imperfect before God; but however defective it may appear to men, there may be views on the evidence before our minds, in which it may be correct. We must not then despise each other's judgment. The main thing requisite to form a judgment according to the mind of God, the only thing of supreme importance, is to have that spiritual mind, which enables us to discern something of the relative proportion and value of all things, and raises us above the natural selfishness of our hearts.

We may learn hence to be very forbearing, and tender to each other's apparent ignorances and infirmities. Something in the conduct of another may to us appear very untrue and unjust, very severe and uncharitable; but, perhaps, the light of heaven may discover to us, that that which had this appearance was in reality, from the situation of that person, and the evidence before him, an embracing of the truth, and an exercise of great forbearance, kindness, justice, and charity. To their unspeakable and most joyful surprise, Christian acquaintances, who were cold and suspicious on earth, may hereafter find that they greatly wronged each other, and learn afresh to admire that grace from which all that is good really comes, and which has pardoned and accepted all.

Let us ever remember the nature of charity; as it beareth, or covereth, "all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth." This will lead us to put, if possible, a favourable construction on the words of those from whom we differ, and enable us far more effectually to illustrate the real doctrine. Men very often mean the same truth, while they express it differently. Yet never let us practise that spurious charity which is the birth of indifference and infidelity. We must on the one hand "hold fast the form of sound words," and on the other "speak the truth in love." Divine Spirit! Thou Spirit of truth and love! enable us to manifest by these graces that we are thine!

Remember that *no truth is revealed in the Scriptures for speculative purposes*, and that, however *Christians* may differ on the speculative point, they *agree in desiring one and the same practical influence.* Ten thousand things are not revealed, which our curiosity would prompt us to wish had been revealed. Nothing is manifested but what is profitable for us to know for devotional and practical use. The divine sovereignty, the freedom of grace, the operations of the Holy Ghost, the attributes of God, are all most influential in producing those holy tempers and dispositions which Christians profess universally to desire, and without which we are not meet for the heavenly inheritance. It should tend to draw good men nearer to each other, to remember, that however they form different speculative conclusions, on doctrinal points, from the same passages, if real Christians, they agree in practical conclusions, and they wish for themselves, and for each other, the highest possible degrees, attainable on earth, of faith, hope, and love of conformity to the divine mind and will, of humility, contrition, self-denial, and devotedness to God. Here there is no dispute among them. The differences of real Christians are more as to the mode of producing these results, than as to the results themselves; and how painful that those differences should often be so maintained as to destroy the very results which they are aim-

ing to produce. "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

Be willing to *suspend your judgment on doubtful points.* Is there nothing to be revealed hereafter? Are there no higher attainments of knowledge after years of experience in the Christian life and of lengthened study? Will not the glory of the heavenly world throw a full blaze of light which we cannot now anticipate? "What I do thou knowest not know, but thou shalt know hereafter." There is much holy confidence and submission to God and many other Christian feelings to be exercised in such a suspense of judgment. On great points, on the salvation of Christ, free justification, adoption, and sanctification, let us be very bold and strenuous, and "contend earnestly for the faith;" on more doubtful points, when we have not clear views, and our opinion is asked, let us reply with Augustine—"I had rather know than be ignorant of the questions which you ask me; but because I cannot attain it, I had rather admit a cautious ignorance, than profess a false knowledge." This seems to have been the habit of his mind.*

Endeavor to derive *practical improvement from controversy.* Differences of opinion should teach us many practical lessons. When eminent scholars and Chistians disagree in important points, how plain the duty not to lean to our own understanding, but to be as babes before our God, ever seeking his guidance! This is a school in which we should learn humility, forbearance, and candor, the weakness of human reason, the inestimable benefit of that body of unquestionable and incontrovertible truth which we have in God's book, and the absolute necessity of having the foundation of our faith only on God's word. Seek to make a practical use of known truth, and that which is unknown will by degrees, as far as it is profitable, be revealed to you.

The different views of Christians have sometimes been perverted to keep men from all religion. Persons have made it an excuse for wholly neglecting their souls. They have gladly availed themselves of such a plausible argument, and God, leaving them to their own wicked wishes, has allowed them, in just judgment, to go on in the way which they desired, till it issued in their everlasting ruin. They blind their minds now with the sophistry, "Let Christians agree on their religion, and then I will attend to it." The sophistry will all be dispelled at the day of judgment, and the neglect of plain things, because of differences about more obscure things, will only disclose and evidence the real cause of this neglect—an inward hatred of God and his ways. How many things are perfectly clear and undisputed, among all having any pretence to the name of Christians! Attend to these. There is a glorious God—there is a complete Saviour—there is a Guide and Sanctifier, and Comforter—there is pardon for sin, meetness for heaven, resurrection from the dead, judgment to come, and immortal bliss for the righteous. You cannot doubt these—they are clear—they are without controversy. Use them daily and improve them, and intermeddle not with things doubtful and mysterious, till you lose all religious principles and all hope.

But if called to maintain and defend scriptural truth, remember, that without the experience of the power of that truth, you are little qualified to be its advocate, and can do little good. Dr. Owen strongly urges the importance of having abiding in our hearts the power of the truth contended for. He justly says—"When not the sense of the words, but of the things is in our hearts; when we have communion with God in the doctrine we contend for, then shall we be garrisoned by the grace of God against all the assaults of men. Without this, all our contending is of no value to ourselves. What am I the better if I can dispute that Christ is God, but have no sense that he is a God in covenant with my soul? What will it avail me to evince, by testimonies and arguments, that he has made satisfaction for sin, if, through my unbelief, the wrath of God abides on me? Will it be any advantage to me in the issue to profess and dispute that God works the conversion of a sinner, by the

* See Milner's Church History, Vol. ii. p. 168.

rresistible grace of his Spirit, if I was ever acquainted, experimentally, with hat opposition to the law of God, which s in my own soul by nature, and with he efficacy of the exceeding greatness of he power of God, in quickening, enlightning, and bringing forth the fruits of bedience in me? It is the power of the ruth in the heart alone, that will make s cleave to it indeed in an hour of emptation. Let us not then think that ve are any thing the better for our conviction of the great doctrines of the gosel, unless we have a continual experience of their necessity and excellency n our standing before God, and our communion with him."

When shall we rise to those higher regions of Christianity, that purer and better air of Christian faith, and hope, and love, in which some of God's favored servant have lived—like Enoch walking with God; or like Paul saying, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved?"

The conflict with a man's own corruptions is one step toward this. When daily struggling with the power of inward sin, and humbled to the dust under the continual rebuffs of Satan, when sensible that there is an inward scene of abominations which man beholds not, but God beholds; who can be severe against his neighbor? Leighton well speaks of one useful controversy or dispute, one sort of war, most noble in its nature, and most worthy of a Christian, and this not to be carried on against enemies at a great distance, but such as are bred within our own breasts; against these it is most reasonable to wage an endless war, and them it is our duty to persecute to death."

A view of the glory of the Saviour is another step towards that holy and heavenly spirit. The Church cannot be united till, like the inhabitants above, we behold "his glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" and thence, filled with love and admiration, aim at this one object, the advancement of his honor, and the exaltation of his name.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Danger connected with Study.

There may be some ready at first to think that there is little need to dwell on this point, and that we should rather urge the indolent to active study, than warn men of the dangers of study. But the address made by the prophet Isaiah to Babylon of old, is still too applicable in our day—"Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and there is none besides me." And it must be admitted that wicked men, the more learning they have, are the more dangerous to the truth. Their abuse of knowledge has led pious men to undervalue learning, as if it was the cause of this evil, and the acquired knowledge was to blame for the moral depravity; but it may effectually guard against such errors to look at the extensive usefulness of a Hooker, an Usher, a Hall, or a Beveridge, in the Church of England; an Owen, a Charnock, a Howe, and an Edwards, among those of another communion.

Yet are there real dangers encompassing and surrounding every human attainment, and our corruption breaks forth amidst all that which should restrain it. We see immense learning in many Romanists, such as Bellarmine and others, and all their talents and learning perverted to the maintenance of fundamental errors. We see learning without piety extensively injurious; puffing up its possessor with intolerable pride, and leading him to the haughty and disdainful contempt of all who have not similar learned acquirements.

But let us notice more distinctly some of the dangers of study.

The first that may be mentioned is *forming our religious sentiments from our own reasoning powers*, rather than from the Divine record. Truths, we are tempted to think, are to be made out by argument, by intellect, by the powers of the mind, and by human literature. Like our first parents, we are seeking divine wisdom independently of God. Let these controlling thoughts reign over and reg-

ulate our studies: God can only teach the things of God; he teaches in his word, and under the guidance of his Holy Spirit; every thing must be subject to that word, and every thought brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Nothing whatever that is human will stand against his word; nor will our own notions in the least help us when we appear before him, and have to give account how far we have believed and acted according to that word. The love of our own sentiments, because they are our own, seeking to display our skill rather than to exercise holy feelings, and the desire to maintain sentimnts which have been once, and perhaps without due premeditation, avowed, have led to much mischief. Beware of your own particular views, and especially of an early declaration of them. There is also another view in which we may regard this danger: when we receive things only as we can comprehend them by reason. We may see to what an awful extent this has been carried among the Neologians on the continent, who, aiming to subject every part of revelation to their own vain conceptions of what is right and wrong, enter into the very regions of infidelity. But there is a serious degree of the same evil among professing Christians. Every thing is with some to be so made out by reason, that no room is left for faith in the promises. They will go as far as their reason will carry them, but they hesitate where something above reason is to be received. Now though God's service is in the highest degree a *reasonable service*, yet the very peculiarity of Christianity is faith in the promise. This made the whole army of believers (Heb. xi.) so triumphant; this carried the Apostles and the Reformers through difficulties insurmountable to reason; and only as we live by faith, and above the scanty reach of this world's wisdom, are we genuine Christians, glorifying God and advancing the gospel.

2. A similar danger to the one last mentioned is *taking our sentiments merely from human authors:* we say *merely*, for there is a just respect due to human authority. Parents must teach their children the first principles of religion; ministers must teach their people the gospel of Christ; and children and people should hear with meekness and submission the word of truth. But Christian parents and faithful teachers will be anxious in every truth which they teach, to bring before those whom they instruct the only sure foundation of truth, the word of God; and not tell them, "Take it not on my word, but on the word of him who is my Teacher and my Father, as well as yours;" this will give its just strength to religious truth, and lay a foundation that will support the soul amid all the shakings and storms of this life. Too generally, however, we are leaning, not on Jehovah and his truth, but on man and his opinions; and the turning point in our minds is, not the overwhelming testimony of the sacred word, after a due search of that word, but the weight of human testimony, and so human writings thrust out the Divine record. Luther "expressed his fear even in his day of too great a multiplication of books: that as fathers, councils, and doctors had superseded the Apostles, so it should be again; and he modestly said he wished his own books to last only for the age in which they were written, and which they might serve; believing that God would give to succeeding ages their own laborers, as he had always heretofore done."*

It marks a tendency to this danger, when Christians are too much afraid of this world's literature, and pay too much court to them, and speak too highly of them, as if men greatly skilled in human learning were, on that account alone, to have great deference shewn to them in religion. If nationally God addressed his people, "I have raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece;" the day too will come, when spiritually it will be seen, that to be a member of Zion, to receive the lively oracles, to know and love God, is infinitely superior to all the acquirements of classical literature, and all the arts and sciences of the world.

3. *Improper motives for study* are very common. Some will read to pass away the time; others to be able to talk

* See Scott's Continuation, Vol. i. p. 212.

of a book; others to gain admiration by criticising it; others because they shall be thought ignorant if they have not read it. There are those who will read for the very purpose of finding fault and cavilling. What spiritual profit can be expected from books which are read from these motives! How can improvement be reaped when it was not even thought of, or sought for! The mere acquisition of knowledge, for the pleasure which it gives, or for the superiority which it confers, is not that Christian motive from which we should pursue our studies. The Rev. Mr. Adam forcibly observes, "Reading is for the most part only a more refined species of sensuality, and answers man's purpose of shuffling off his great work with God and himself, as well as a ball or a masquerade." Our chief motives should be of a far higher kind: to know that we may do the will of God: to be better fitted for serving him and our fellow creatures here; and better prepared for the everlasting state on which we are so soon to enter.

4. *Misdirection in study* is a very serious danger. When first a thirst of knowledge is excited in the mind, it is immensely important to be directed aright. If misdirected, or if following only accidental circumstances, a person reads that which only leads him astray, it may cost him many a wearisome step back again, and days and years of usefulness may be forever lost. There have been ministers who have honestly and openly before their people felt themselves constrained to retract what before they had taught as Divine truth; and infinitely safer and happier is so painful a result, than when to the end "the blind lead the blind" till both are lost. In general it is not safe to go wholly in the track of any human party; we have all our partialities. But how shall we be preserved from this danger; the ignorant need a guide, and those without knowledge cannot but look to others who at least possess more learning and more information than themselves? The chief guard is the word of God, read with fervent prayer, and practised as far as we know with holy fear. Possessing this fear, while a man only goes as far as he has clear testimonies of Scripture, he will either never materially err, or will in the result be preserved from all fatal misdirection. Remember, "with the well advised is wisdom." Prov. xiii. 10.

5. *The neglect of practical piety* is another danger of study. Those who have eagerly entered into studies have felt this. It is the remark of Heutius, in describing his own experience on this point, "I was entirely carried away by the pleasure which I found in learning, and that endless variety which it affords had so taken up my thoughts, and seized all the avenues of my mind, that I was altogether incapable of any sweet and intimate communication with God. These wanderings and indisposition of mind have ever been my grand failing, and they still break in on my prayers, and quite deprive me of all the benefit that I should reap from them. When I withdrew into religious retirement, in order to recollect my scattered thoughts, and fix them on heavenly things, I experienced a dryness and insensibility of soul, by which the Holy Spirit seemed to punish this excessive bent to learning, and the indifference which I had for my spiritual advancement."

From the intense interest which close study calls forth, and from the immense importance of the truths which we are considering, we are apt to get so abstracted in our studies as to neglect our daily duties. Hereafter we shall contemplate, admire, and enjoy; here we are born to toil and labor. But, in fact, no studies teach more effectually, as we have shown, than a faithful practice of religion; intercourse with the poor, visits to the sick and dying, actual conversations with persons in spiritual difficulties, give an experimental knowledge of Theology far beyond books. Never let that time be given to private studies, which positive and plain duties call for. For instance, the duties of his station in life must not be neglected by the Christian; the duties of visiting, instructing, and comforting the sick, the tempted, and the afflicted, must not be omitted, in order to attend to private studies. God gives different gifts. Some men are more especially qualified for learned pursuits, and called to them, and may therefore more

entirely devote themselves to them; but might not some who have been thus occupied, who have seemed to vegetate in books, and to bring no result of real profit to the Church, have been far better employed in directly practical and beneficial services to the Church? We must attend to the practical part of religion, if we would avoid the dangers of merely theoretical views in the mind, which may be worse than useless.

We sometimes see the painful case, of one who is fully acquainted with the theory of religion, but ignorant of its power; having bright intellectual light on the subject of religion, but no spiritual perception. Such an one may have very clear views of the truth, and be able to state them distinctly, and to instruct and edify others, but yet be far from that meekness, humility, and love, and heavenly-mindedness which mark the Christian;—he has that carnal mind, which is *death*; but not that spiritual mind, which "is life and peace." It is very possible to hold "the truth in unrighteousness; and of all characters this is the most awful, for it takes the very weapons that should overthrow sin, and either locks them up, or blunts their edge, or turns them to the maintenance of that which they should destroy.

Bishop Butler makes a reflection which is most awakening and important to all students and teachers, that "Going over the theory of virtue in our thoughts, talking, well and drawing fine pictures of it, this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to the habit of it, in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and form a habit of insensibility to all moral obligations. For from our very faculty of habits, passive impressions by being repeated grow weaker, and thoughts by often passing through the mind are felt less sensibly." Let us very seriously and constantly watch against this danger, by personally and practically applying to ourselves the truths which we learn or teach. Watch against your studies tempting you to neglect devotion. Nothing is a more common snare, and none more ruinous than to think that knowledge is a more desirable attainment than piety—speculative truths than devout and holy feelings. You can neither obtain personal advantage from reading, nor be eminently useful among your fellow Christians, whatever literary acquirements you may obtain, without the spirit of devotion, and that impressive and realizing communion with God, which will give spirituality and unction in all your intercourse with others.

6. *A contempt of others if they are ignorant*, is another danger of study. If a man cannot with logical exactness define his sentiments, or does not know languages, or has not read certain books, a learned student will despise him; but, as Bishop Bedell observes, "Religion is not logic, and he that cannot give a true definition of the soul, is not for that reason without a soul; so he that defines not faith truly, may nevertheless have true faith." But how little reason is there for contempt, when we remember that besides human industry, Divine teaching is absolutely requisite for acquiring saving knowledge; and a man cumbered with the whole load of human learning, may after all be a castaway, and only perish with an aggravated condemnation; while a man with no more knowledge than the publican, or the dying thief, or the converted jailor, may yet be justified and forever saved. We ought to "honor all men." Every human being has an immortal soul, which is of more value than all the world. If only a man saves his own soul and thus secures his everlasting welfare, whatever other attainment he fails of, or is disappointed in, he will in the result be found to be infinitely wiser and happier, than the most prosperous and learned worldly man who loses that soul. How instructive the history of the rich man and Lazarus! Remember, "a scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not."

7. Another danger which may be considered under this head, is not obvious at first sight, but is of very extensive and mischievous consequences, namely, that of *learning leading us to speak or* preach *rather to the capacity of the learned, than to the capacity of* those whom we have chiefly to address, *the middle and*

the lower classes. Nothing is more difficult than for a learned man to speak familiarly, plainly, and perspicuously to the poor, and to bring the great truths of religion, simply and obviously before them. It requires the highest stretch of intellect to do this. The following fact may illustrate these sentiments: Luther and Bucer had both been preaching at a meeting of Protestants, and Luther with remarkable energy and effect. "After Bucer's sermon he supped with Luther, who in the course of conversation commended the discourse of his guest, but added that he himself was the better preacher. Bucer receiving this remark with his accustomed mildness, assented. Luther then spoke seriously and said, "Do not think that I mean to boast foolishly, I well know my own deficiencies, and that I am unable to deliver such an ingenious and learned discourse, as we have this day heard from you; but when I am in the pulpit, I consider who my hearers are, and, because the greater part are an unlearned and simple people, I preach what I think they can understand. But you take a higher flight, but are not understood by our poor people. In this I act like a kind mother who gives her craving infant the breast, thus feeding it with her milk as well as she is able, and thinks this better for its nourishment than if mixed with the sweetest and choicest syrups, and preparations of art." Luther said on another occasion, "They are the best preachers for the common people who teach familiarly, in a homely way, popularly, and most simply."

8. *Intellectual pride* is perhaps the chief danger of study. A man may so pursue even religious studies as to foster the most evil passions of pride, self-exaltation, ambition, love of power, and the like. He may seek to be a great divine rather than a sincere Christian. Dr. Owen speaks most instructively of this temptation; "A man begins to be in repute for piety, wisdom, learning, or the like; he is spoken of much to that purpose; his heart is tickled to hear of it, and his pride and ambition affected with it. If this man now with all his strength ply the things from whence his repute, and esteem, and glory among men do spring, with a secret eye to have it increased, he is entering into temptations, which if he take not heed, will quickly render him a slave of lust. So it was with Jehu; he perceived that his repute for zeal began to grow abroad and he got honor by it; Jonadab comes now in his way, a good and holy man; now, thinks Jehu, I have an opportunity to grow in the honor of my zeal; so he calls Jonadab to him and to work he goes most seriously: the things he did were good in themselves, but he was entered into temptation, and served his lust in all he did. So it is with many scholars; they find themselves esteemed and favored for their learning, this takes hold of their pride and ambition of their hearts; hence they set themselves to study with all diligence, day and night, a thing good in itself, but they do it that they may satisfy the thoughts and words of men wherein they delight; and so in all they do, they make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. It is true, God oftentimes brings light out of this darkness, and turns things to a better issue. After, it may be, a man has studied sundry years with an eye upon his lusts; his ambition, pride, and vain glory; rising early and going to bed late, to give them satisfaction, God comes in with his grace, turns the soul to himself, robs those Egyptian lusts, and so consecrates that to the use of the Tabernacle which was provided for idols."

The first suggestion of Satan was to excite unbelief, and the next was to foster pride. The first lesson in the school of Christ is to trust only in the Lord, and to renounce all our wisdom. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. Be not wise in thine own eyes." The wish to set ourselves above all others, is a manifest evidence of our fallen nature.

This intellectual pride infinitely overvalues languages, literature, and human science, underrates our natural darkness, and slights Christ and his Spirit. Philip Henry (himself no contemptible scholar) remarks on Isaiah, l, 4, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned," &c. "The true learning of a gospel minister consists not in being able to talk Latin fluently, and to dispute in philosophy, but

in being able to speak a word in season to weary souls. He that knows how to do that well is a learned minister."

How great is the danger of literary pride! It puts God at a distance from us. He "knoweth the proud afar off." Psalm cxxxviii, 6. He dwells in the lowly bosom. There are some valuable remarks on this subject in a sermon by Bishop Blomfield, a prelate, from his own superior acquirements, well qualified to give such a testimony. After ably showing that the cultivation of the understanding gratifies the pride of man, from the contemplation of its own strength, discernments, and achievements, and its exultation in discovering the mistakes and failures of others, he observes, "The pride of human reason thus fostered and flattered, comes at length to rely exclusively on its own energies and resources, doubts and disbelieves every thing which it cannot perfectly comprehend, erects its own standard of moral and religious truth, and suspends from its own shifting and uncertain centre, its balance of right and wrong. To such a case, how awfully applicable are the words of St. Paul, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth: and if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." 1 Cor. viii, 1, 2.

9. *Misusing and abusing texts of Scripture* is also to be guarded against. There is need of this caution. How often is that text abused, "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins"—(1 Pet. iv, 8,) by applying the term sins to our own sins, and not those of our fellow creatures. (See Prov. x, 12.) Thus the text in Micah, "What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," (with similar texts, such as Eccles. xii, 13, &c.) has been applied to the notion that we can be saved by our own obedience, instead of the true use, to show us our duty, and humble us in the sense of our disobedience. Very many instances of this kind might be given. It is a very dangerous thing thus to pervert God's word. Men seldom fall into the sin of literally taking away from or adding sentences to God's word, but they often commit this sin, in spirit, by taking away from or adding to the sense of Scripture, and putting their own perverted construction, so as in reality totally to change the word of God. But how awful are the solemn and closing declarations of Scripture, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." An author may well tremble at his own responsibility under such a declaration.

10. *Reading books which we are well satisfied are erroneous*, out of mere curiosity, is no uncommon danger. To read what is to our own conscience a manifestly erroneous book, unless there be a clear call of duty to do so, such as the necessity we may be under of answering it, for the conviction of those with whom we are connected, who have been misled by it, is the very way to unsettle our own minds and perplex our paths. It is dangerous to try the strength of the constitution by tampering with poison, and it is yet more dangerous to tamper with error which is spiritual poison. It may be necessary for a clergyman to have books of this kind, for the sake of reference; but there are many books which he may have in his library which it would be very prejudicial for him to be often reading, as it would either generate a controversial spirit, or deteriorate and lower his own tone of religion.

11. There is a danger of *overvaluing or unduly pressing what is in itself good.* Let not the student fall into that which in medicine would be called *quackery:* or give any one particular truth that prominence, and make it of that distinguished importance, as if it alone would heal all our spiritual maladies. It is true that all truth is intimately associated, and if you hold one distinctly, others are implied: it is true that eminent men have been raised up to revive particular truths, and have been honoured in doing so; but from an over-

weening conceit of our own wisdom, not regarding that infinite wisdom, which, seeing every exigency of the soul, has in the Scripture met that exigency with appropriate truth, we may here fall into serious mistakes, to the great injury of ourselves and others. This evil is the more serious when our own notions are regarded as this eminent truth. We may think our own views to be so essential to religion, that if men hold these things they are religious, and if they hold them not they are not religious. The remedy of this danger is, first, the scriptural *proportion of faith;* let us give things a prominence as the Scriptures do, and omit nothing which the Scriptures reveal as truth: and then, constant prayer for divine help, to keep us from leaning to our own understanding.

12. In addition to general dangers, common to all, each individual has in his *peculiar circumstances, special temptations.* Each age, and each situation of life has these: those of youth are rashness, credulity, presumption, unmeasured statements, &c.—Those of age are excessive caution, hesitation, delay, suspicion, and complaining. The rich and great are in danger of haughtiness and dogmatism; and the poor of cringing or speaking evil. Men of brilliant talents and of lively imagination, men of profound and close thinking, and men of tender and affectionate feelings, have each the respective dangers of their peculiar excellencies: these things may become temptations and affect our reception of the truth, and we should watch and pray against them. Divine grace can give our natural tendencies a happy direction and make us in every station "like a tree that bringeth forth his fruit in his season."

13. If there be these dangers in *religious* study, there are not fewer dangers in *scientific studies.* These are in their place important, but if pursued without religious views and feelings, they may lead to serious mischief. Paul was peculiarly neglected and denied at Athens. While in the dark ages we have seen the low state to which religion was reduced without learning, we have also seen, in the last century, on a prodigious scale, the miseries produced by unsanctified science through the continent. Immense talents, without religious control or restraint, became a vast engine for desolating the world; the worst human passions were let loose by men of fine genius, and wit, and science, and in their wild licentiousness every kind of iniquity abounded.

Religion re-acts with a great blessing on science; but how little can science do for man's highest happiness without religion! While it is a great satisfaction to be able to state that the men who have made the greatest advances in science have been steady friends to religion; it cannot be denied that men of science have sometimes been found among the leaders of infidelity. They cannot bear the humbling truths of religion, and are filled with indignation at its holy and strict requirements, and, "vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind," they neither enter themselves, nor willingly allow others to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Some sentiments on this subject, in the sermon already quoted, are truly scriptural, and forcibly impressed;—"In all ages of the world it has been the way of mankind to bestow far greater pains upon the cultivation of the faculties, the strengthening of the reasoning powers, and the refining of taste, than upon the less pleasing and more arduous task of correcting vicious propensities and habits, purifying the conscience, and fixing in the mind principles of piety and charity. —The cultivation of the understanding gratifies the pride of man, while the discipline of the passions implies its mortification." After showing very forcibly the dangers which may follow, from the mere cultivation of the intellect, it is added, "Whatever has a manifest tendency to exalt the dignity of the human understanding, to the disparagement of practical religious knowledge, or to make the one entirely independent of the other, we deprecate and withstand, as inconsistent with that true philosophy, and we may add that genuine philanthropy, whose chief aim and lesson is to cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and that the soul may be fit to

partake, in his means of grace, and his promises of glory. We are persuaded by experience, as well as certified by the word of God, that, as with the truly religious man every fresh accession of knowledge, of what kind soever, teaches a lesson of humility, and adds to the materials of piety and thankfulness; so with the unbeliever and the profane,—each step which is taken in the paths of science is one step further from God, inasmuch as it ministers to pride and self-sufficiency, and exalts understanding above conscience and the testimony of the Spirit."

Medical and Legal Students, in pursuing their professional studies, are exposed to many temptations, which may materially affect and injure their higher pursuits of religious knowledge. Each profession has had, and still has, eminent and well instructed Christians; but in the course of the lectures which medical men attend, not to speak of materialism, is there not a leaving of God out of his own world, and an introducing of another deity, under the terms nature, and the course of nature? It is to be feared that the Christian student will find many of his fellow-students, in both professions, to be professed infidels, and many without any religion! Seductions will be presented on every side, either to give up his religion, or wholly to neglect it. Be aware of such dangers. Be cautious in the choice of your companions; do not willingly and unnecessarily join yourself to the wicked. Be not easily drawn into argument with those who only want to display their own infidelity. It is our duty to give a solid answer to a real inquirer for the truth's sake; it is not our duty to attempt to meet every cavil of the captious. Simply confess your Saviour by your testimony and conduct, and your character will in the result be the best evidence of your principles.

It is well to be acquainted with these dangers, that we may watch against them. Humility and the fear of the Lord, a praying spirit and a single eye, will keep a man in the right path. The Lord will watch over those who confide in him, and his Spirit will guide them unto all truth.

I cannot close this chapter better than in the devout words of Ambrose Serl from his Horæ Solitaræ, a work full of fine devotional feeling: "O thou believer! pray to be emptied more and more of thyself, of thy carnal will, and of a unsanctified knowledge, that thou mayest be filled with Jesus, and with that wisdom which leadeth to the contemplation of God, and to the everlasting enjoyment of him. Neither much nor little human knowledge will hurt thee, if it be thou subordinate in thy soul to that which is divine. Learning is a useful servant but must never be the master. Let it follow thee to Christ, and not lead thee from him. If thou art rightly taught thou wilt see the shallowness of all human erudition, and how little that deserves the name of science which mortals are proud to know. Thou wilt learn the most difficult and abtruse subject in the world, which no man ever could learn without divine instruction; even thine own ignorance—a branch of knowledge which men abhor to be acquainted with, but which, after all, is the summit of their attainments upon earth.....Be watchful over every earthly furniture of the mind; because in this corrupt state it will naturally bear a close attachment to envy and pride. When thou art sweetly taught of God, thou wilt see aright in what rank thou art to place all human attainments.....One lesson from Christ will make thy heart burn far more than all the pompous knowledge, or rather splendid ignorance of the schools; he will instruct thee, not only by lessons of wisdom, but also by lessons of love. He has promised to be with his people always, and to the end of the world; and therefore he will ever be with thee, guiding thee by his counsel till he hath brought thee to glory."

CHAPTER IX.

Practical Rules for Study.

In all our conduct it is important to keep a vigilant eye upon that which God mainly regards, the heart, or the motives

which influence our minds. This is especially important in study. Time may be wasted or lost in reading, nay in reading valuable works, if the motives which influence us be carnal, if the end be unworthy.

We are apt to aim at wrong ends. The general principle, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," should regulate also our studies. No Christian can have studied much without experiencing the temptations which are connected with it, to deviate from this principle. Could we more simply aim at the right end in acquiring knowledge, how often would it rectify, and improve, and elevate our studies! We might not gain so much the increase of that knowledge which increases sorrow (Eccles. i, 18); we might not have a name among men, but we should gain that better wisdom which comes from above.

A few practical rules, some of which have indeed in substance been expressed in the preceding parts of this work, may direct the reader's mind to those points, which call for most attention, and may most materially assist him in his progress.

1. Ever *Remember the vast importance of a right state of mind*, in order to profitable study. Look at the case of the Corinthians. The Apostle would not teach them the more difficult doctrines of religion, because their minds were worldly and carnal. He fed them with milk and not with meat, because they could not bear the meat. A carnal mind, in real converts, will thus prevent them from receiving the whole truth. The grand impediments to the acquisition of truth are those which relate to the state of the mind, such as the pride of learning, the desire of victory, the love of ease and preferment in this world, ranging ourselves under human authority and popular opinion, joining one side, and the like. And the great help to its aqquisition is a pure and holy, a teachable, meek, and humble mind, a mind open to the Scriptures, and ready to bow wholly to the whole will of God. Thus has God made the extensive range of divine truth, in all its parts, the test and the reward of a simple and upright mind. Such a mind readily embraces it, while on the other hand a proud and worldly mind pollutes or rejects it. The ambitious desire and occasion of finding fault with views which they dislike, and God, who designs to discriminate men's character by his own truth, lets them have occasion of stumbling in abundance, and they stumble, perhaps forever. But those very offences on which they stumble, lead the upright to a more close waiting on God, till they attain the truth. As the best food is unpleasant to a disordered stomach, and hurts the health, and the brightest light is painful to weak and diseased eyes, and injures the sight, so if our minds be carnal and impure, the purest truths will only irritate and offend our bad passions. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Let a man have real sanctification, which, Archbishop Usher says, "is nothing less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his will to the will of God, and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love as a whole burnt offering to Christ," and he has the best preparation for profitable study. We would then recommend the student often to examine his motives for studying, and the state of his mind.*

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* *Questions for Self-Examination, chiefly extracted from an old Writer.*

What is my great design in giving myself to study, and what is my daily view and purpose in pursuing it?

Have I entirely given up myself to our Lord Jesus Christ, to serve him unreservedly and supremely?

Do I every day seek direction and blessing from God in all my studies?

In labouring after knowledge in human science, do I always make the service of Christ my supreme design?

Do I pursue my studies daily as one that must give account of my time and of all my advantages?

How many hours have I this day spent in study, or for the pursuit of knowledge, allowing for the great maxim, that to pray well is to study well?

Do I pursue practical divinity as well as the knowledge of doctrines and controversies?

Am I solicitous that my soul may grow in grace by every increasing degree of Christian knowledge?

Do I choose my company by their seriousness, as well as by their ingenuity and learning?

Do I take constant care to avoid all company

2. *Especially seek real humility.* Cultivate a humble spirit in all your studies. "Humility," one of the Fathers observes, "is like the violet which grows low on the ground, hangs the head downward, hides itself with its own leaves, and were it not that its fragrance betrays it to the observation of others, would choose to to live and die in its own pleasing obscurity." The highest archangel is the most prostrate before the throne of God, and the nearest approaches to him are marked, as we see in Abraham, Job, Isaiah, and Paul, by the deepest humility. Do not affect to have universal knowledge: it is out of the question for any human being. The range of knowledge is so vast we can but know in part. Do not attempt to fathom things that are inscrutable to mortal eyes: some seem to consider themselves obliged to know and determine all that comes before them; an ingenuous confession of ignorance, where we are ignorant, is true wisdom as well as honesty. The same spirit will lead you not to boast of or display your acquirements, for self-exaltation and vain glory, and to have the mere reputation of learning. All kinds of studies duly improved will promote humility, so that the most wise and learned may be, like the divine Saviour, most truly meek and lowly of heart. The experience of the Christian exceedingly promotes this: once he might think himself wise, and strong, and good, but his innumerable mistakes, and errors, and corruptions, have laid him, when more advanced, in the very dust before God. Humility has been a distinguishing feature in the character of all those who were at the same time eminently pious and learned. Nay, the greatest men in science have ever been the humblest. Sir Isaac Newton, when some one expressed their admiration of his discoveries, replied, "Alas! I am only like a child picking up pebbles on the shore of the great ocean of truth."

3. *Draw your religious principles simply from the word of God.* In reading many books, there is great danger of being corrupted from the simplicity of pure religion. Heresies have generally sprung from men of superior talents and unsanctified learning, who would not be in subjection to the plain declaration of Scripture. The apostle gives a rule, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy." Let all your sentiments on religious subjects be taken from, and be subjects to the Bible, and taken, not from a few partially extracted passages, but from an enlarged view of the whole, and a comparison of the different parts of truth one with another. No religious truth is essential, but what is plainly asserted, or may be easily deduced from the Holy Scriptures. All things, then, that human writers assert, must be proved by this test, and received and rejected as they are comformable or not to the only infallible standard. Bishop Pilkington, in his Exposition on Haggai, published in 1560, says "Let the world take heed, for 'if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the pit.' This miserable common excuse, which is so often in their mouths, shall not excuse them when they say, Thus we are taught—our ghostly fathers say so—and our fathers before us have so believed: Christ says, "ye shall both fall into the pit." Believe no doctrine that teaches to go to heaven other than by Christ freely; or which is not written and contained in the Bible; for that only is the perfect word of God, and which only teaches true salvation." The old maxim is very true and important, "A good textuary is a good theologian." The ancients possessed not the compass to guide them in their voyages, and could not tell where they were unless they saw the stars: blessed be God, we have not only the mariners' compass within the ship, to guide our course across the deep, but the more important

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which may be dangerous to my morals or to my studies?

Have I been in any company where I have received good myself, or done good to others?

Have I indulged myself in any thing so as to put my mind out of frame for evening worship?

Have I suffered any thing to carry away my heart from God, so as to make me neglect devotion, or perform it in a slight or careless manner?

Do I watch against all evil appetites and passions, and endeavor to subdue them early, that I may learn by my own experience, and teach others by my own example?

Am I ever seeking the spiritual good of all around me?

compass of the word of God within the Church, to guide us in our voyage to heaven. We must keep a constant eye on this compass, if we would sail in a straight course. The reformers (in Edward the Sixth's Primer)taught the whole nation to pray, "Let me neither follow my own will, nor the fancies of other men, neither let me be beguiled with the masque of old customs, long usages, fathers' decrees, ancient laws, nor any thing that fighteth with thy holy ordinances, and blessed commandment, but faithfully believe, and steadfastly confess that to be true godliness which is learned in thy Holy Bible, and according unto that to order my life unto the praise of thy holy name."

4. *Gain the habit of early rising.* It is of importance in order to profitable study. Habit will make any reasonable plan easy; and the hours of morning are generally less liable to be disturbed, and therefore more quiet. Early hours, too, are more favourable to health. Early rising will make a vast difference in favour of your acquiring knowledge and communicating the results of your acquirements to others. Men who have been eminently useful to their fellow-creatures, have generally been early risers. To those in youth and health, we would say, Rise at five o'clock, and never study after ten at night; the knowledge which is gained after that hour will never compensate for the loss of health, which it so often occasions. Let it however be added, that no studies should infringe on the hours of devotion; nor yet on those of necessary exercise.

5. *Be diligent in studies.* Nothing valuable is attained by the lazy and indolent student, who reads merely for amusement, to pass away time, and without any close application. Solomon says, "I gave my heart to know wisdom." On which Dr. Barrow remarks, "He who made it his choice before all things; who so earnestly and happily did pray for it; upon whom it is so expressly said that God in a special manner and plentiful measure did bestow it; who avers God to be the sole Donor of it (for the Lord, says he, "giveth wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding,") yet even did he first give his heart to it: he did not only gape for it to receive it by mere infusion; but he worked and studied hard for it: he was indeed a great student, an inquisitive searcher into nature, a curious observer of the world, a profound considerer and comparer of things, and by that industrious course, promoted by the Divine blessing, he arrived that great stock of so renowned a wisdom." This diligence will lead you to improve opportunities. Bishop Stillingfleet pursued his studies with great advantage in his walks, with a memorandum book, and his great work, the Origines Sacræ is said to have been thus first composed in the fields. Some who have been called to journey much, have been able to read much in journies. It is not so much superior talent and genius, as diligent, and persevering, and constant industry, that makes men advanced students. None, whatever talent they may have had, who have been slothful and indolent, have been extensively useful, and none, with industry rightly applied have failed of attaining, both honour and usefulness. "Nepotian," Jerome said, "by daily reading and meditation, had made his soul a library of Christ; and Blesilla, though she was so far overpowered with weakness and sickness, that her foot would scarce bear her body, yet she was seldom found without a Bible in her hand."

6. *Study regularly and perseveringly.* Some have more the command of time than others; but in general we may say, avoid mere desultory reading, and have a regular plan of study. Keep a list of such books as you mean to read, and, excepting in books of reference, go through one, before you beign another. Some have found it useful to divide their studies, and give portions of time in the week to each. At any rate, plan, and pursue a comprehensive course of study. Have a book for every spare hour. Lose not the odd moments, but let there be a book, ready to fill them up. Do not in general skim through books. What is thus lightly read, is of little profit. Good books will be much more useful, if patiently read, and well weighed, and considered. But still, different kinds of books

require to be read in different ways: Lord Bacon justly remarks, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be only read in parts, others to be read, but not cursorily, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention." It has been found useful to mark with a pencil, those passages that most impress your mind, that you may read them again or refer to them more easily. The habit of study should never be lost. The Rev. Mr. Scott, to the last year of his life, spent many hours every day in his study. If we live only on old stores, we shall never enlarge our knowledge. It is allowed, that it is not easy diligently to pursue a course of persevering study: our families and our daily duties must not be neglected. It requires fixed plans, vigorously followed up. Our natural indolence and the love of society, must be broken through. Cecil says, "Every man, whatever be his natural dispositions, who would urge his powers to the highest end, must be a man of solitary studies."

7. *Reflect on what you read.* Meditation and reflection are the better half of study. It is the more difficult, but the more profitable. We like the luxury of letting new thoughts enter our minds, without the trouble of weighing their truth and value. Like the Athenians, we are desiring new things rather than truth. But the way to make thoughts our own, and to attain solid knowledge, and new and original ideas, is to revolve what we read much in our own minds; to compare it with similar things; and thus both ascertain its real value, and profitably apply it to use.—"It is not so important," says Mrs. More, "to know every thing, as to know the exact value of every thing, to appreciate what we learn, and to arrange what we know." Miss Bowdler, with great justice observes, "The best book or the most instructive conversation will afford little pleasure or advantage, by being merely remembered, in comparison with what it might afford, by exciting new reflections in the mind which lead to a new train of thought, and make the riches of others become in some sort its own."

Students who are always reading without intermission, and seldom weighing or deliberating, make but little progress in true wisdom. Study and reading, as Locke has observed, are distinct things. A man of great reading is not therefore a man of great knowledge. But patient reflection, and unbroken attention have been the great secrets of acquiring the profound knowledge which distinguished such men as Bacon and Newton. Luther thus expresses his views of the best way to make a Christian divine. "Three things make a divine; meditation, prayer, and temptation: and three things must be done by the minister of the word —search the Bible, pray seriously, and always remain a learner."

A due reflection on valuable books will be assisted by reperusing them. There are some books that may be read again and again with great advantage: such works as Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Milner's Church History, Scott's Essays, &c. may, especially after certain intervals, be read over again with more profit the second time than the first. Mr. Cecil remarks, "I have long adopted an expedient which I have found of singular service. I have a shelf in my study for tried authors, and one in my mind for tried principles and characters. When an author has stood a thorough examination, and will bear to be taken as a guide, I put him on the shelf." The reperusal of such tried authors once a year, or once in two or three years, will be found highly profitable.

8. *Converse with others on the subjects which you study.* Even if you only tell them what you have learnt, the very communication will confirm and enlarge your own ideas; but it is surprising how much the intercourse of congenial minds, and the interchange of sentiments enlarges and expands our knowledge. Peter Martyr said of Bucer, that "he never left his table without being more learned." Another says, mere reading makes a pedant, conversation unfolds, enlarges, and applies the use of books." There are few things more eminently advantageous than free intercourse with aged and intelligent Christians, or with pious fellow-students. How frequently is time miser-

bly lost when friends assembled together merely to pass it away in such casual conversation as may happen to arise, or any thing that may divert or amuse, without reference to knowledge or edification! (Matt. xii, 36.) How invaluable would this time be if rightly improved in the wise discussion of edifying truth with the spirit of Christian love, and with the desire of glorifying the Saviour. The student should have practical and profitable questions to ask experienced Christians, and all should be ready and glad to give information to others, a gift which will be returned with profit, for we acquire by communicating. But while we obtain benefit from conversation with intelligent Christians, too great attention even to a religious acquaintance, wastes precious time, fills the mind with self conceit, and draws it off from deep study.

9. *Study truth in its use*, rather than in is logical abstract statement. Here the pious and humble mind has its pre-eminent advantage over that of the mere reasoner. Believing the truth simply as it lies in the Scripture, the lowly and practical Christian views it in its daily application; a promise fills him with hope, a threatening excites him to caution, and a direction leads him to holy practice; while the mere scholar is spending all his time in looking at its possible meaning, its imaginary bearings, and the defence of his own sentiments. Remember that practice is a most important help to scriptural knowledge. Personal religion, and a deep experience of the power of the gospel, and real devotion, will lead to solid conclusions, while a neglect of these will leave you open to all sorts of error. "Studious pursuits," it has been observed, "from the great hold which they take of the mind, as well as from the importance which we properly attach to them, may produce a habit of thinking when we are called upon to act." Obedience and submission to the Divne Will, even though they may interfere with our studies, promote, as we have shown, that state of mind which is most favourable to the acquisition of saving knowledge. Hence many, who are very unlearned as it regards human literature, are deeply acquainted with the Divine word.* But if both learning and a holy life cannot be obtained, we can have no doubt which to choose; seeing holiness is essential to our everlasting felicity. Thomas a Kempis presses the same sentiments. "Because men are more solicitous to learn much than to live well, they fall into error, and receive little benefit from their studies. In the approaching day of universal judgment it will not be inquired what we have read, but what we have done; not how eloquently we have spoken, but how holily we have lived. He is truly learned who has learned to abandon his own will, and do the will of God."

The Scripture statement is, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." This is especially important to ministers. The caution with which Henry Martyn charged himself, should not be forgotten. "May I be taught to remember, that all other studies are merely subservient to the great work of ministering holy things to immortal souls. May the most holy works of the ministry, and those which require most devotedness of soul, be the most dear to my heart." The practice of ministerial duties will materially call forth and aid the powers of a minister. For instance, in explaining the Scripture to his family, or among his cottagers in their dwellings,

* It has been well remarked, "Were a man able to write in seven languages; could he converse daily with the sweets of all the liberal sciences, that polite men ordinarily pretend unto; did he entertain himself with all the ancient and modern histories; and could he feast continually on the curiosities which all sorts of learning may bring unto him; none of all this will afford the ravishing satisfaction, much less would any grosser delights of the senses do it, which he might find in relieving the distresses of a poor, mean, miserable neighbor, and which he might much more find in doing any extensive service for the kingdom of our great Saviour in the world, or any thing to redress the miseries under which mankind is generally languishing." See Cotton Mather's Student and Pastor. It was a weighty saying of Archbishop Williams, "I have passed through many places of honor and trust, both in church and state, more than any of my order in England for seventy years before. But were I assured that by my preaching I had but converted one soul to God, I should herein take more comfort than all the honors and offices that have ever been bestowed upon me." See Fuller's Church History.

he will often find his own heart deeply affected and impressed with the enlarged and fresh views of divine truth, which God will give him, while he is doing his work.

10. *Watch against the dangers of study.* Some of the principal have already been pointed out. A student is tempted, on the one hand, to an indolent listless way of study, or to study by fits and starts, without regularity or perseverance. Or, he is seduced on the other, to neglect prior and plain duties, by an excessive love to his studies, or perhaps to pursue them to the injury of his health. There is a danger of letting lighter studies divert our minds from severer studies. The mind should be disciplined and inured to that reading which makes a strong demand on its patient attention.

A man may get a passion for a complete library; a thing unattainable; for the largest libraries in the world are still destitute of rare and valuable books. One of the greatest dangers of a large library, is its tendency to induce a neglect of the Holy Scriptures, in their unaccompanied and daily study. Besides, the mass of mankind have not much time for study; a few boks, well selected and well digested, make the wise man. Men who read most, are not therefore the wisest. Men who read the best books, and make them their own by meditation and experience, are truly wise. Is there not too much indiscriminate reading, and too little meditation and experience? Shun, as a plague, all works tending to excite sensual thoughts, or to defile the mind: they leave a polluting stain within, that will not easily be got rid of: they weaken the power of resistance against temptation; they often lead to total and final ruin. It is an honor to a Christian, not to be in any way acquainted with such writings as common report, or the first glance, will discover to be pernicious. Let not the corruptions of heathen classics give you their turn of mind, their sensuality, pride, and vain glory. By nothing, except it be by sense, does Satan reign more than by pride of intellect. The Christian must cleanse himself from both. 2 Cor. vii, 1.

These dangers are obvious; but there are others equally to be guarded against. Remember, that no mere knowledge will save your soul. You may know all mysteries; but, if you want charity, you will perish, notwithstanding such knowledge. Beware also of a mere scientific, controversial, or philosophical study of religion. It is an important criterion given to us by the excellent Bernard, "In reading books, let us not look so much for science as the feeling of truth in the heart." Dr. Buchanan, complaining of himself at College, as attending too much to science, says, "I drink of the Cam and sip of Zion, whereas I ought to sip of the Cam and drink deep of Zion." Many may make the complaint with more justice than he did. Beware again of despising others. We see this in that tone of cutting irony and sarcasm, joke and levity, which is the temptation of peculiar and often powerful minds, who feel their superiority over others, and thus display it, wounding them without mercy. God will not honor such methods. We must speak the truth in meekness and love.

Mere study without God's blessing, sought in prayer and expected in faith, tends to foster evil passions, instead of suggesting valuable and holy thoughts, and nourishing holy desires.

11. *Improve those general and other means which God presents,* besides that of mere books, and which are very helpful to the attainment of Divine truth. Herbert, in a chapter, entitled the Parson's Library, tells us, that "his library is a holy life." An insight into our own heart, and an actual practice of all holy duties, are essential to our right knowledge of Divine truths and the effective preaching of them to others. John Smith, in his Select Sermons says, "To seek our divinity merely in books and writings, is to seek the living among the dead. We do but in vain seek God many times in these where his truth too often is not so much enshrined as entombed." Mr. Newton, in his Letters, speaking of a plan for a compendious library, recommends four comprehensive volumes, the Bible, the book of Creation, the book of Providence, and the book of the Heart. His remarks on these subjects, are well worth reading. In fact, their own family and con-

nexions, their neighborhood, and the state of the Church, and of the world, when duly regarded according to the light which the Scriptures throw upon them, furnish private Christians with a striking Commentary on that holy book, and Christian ministers with the best groundwork for their public instruction. It was said of Dr. Watts, "Whatever he took in hand, was by his incessant solicitude for souls converted into theology."

The works of God also will furnish us with innumerable illustrations of the word of God; the vegetable, the animal, and the mineral kingdoms, may supply us with a profitable, as well as an interesting help to religious study. Bernard says, "There is sometimes more to be found in woods than there is in books. Trees and stones will teach thee that which is not to be learned from other masters." "The heavens," too, "declare the glory of God," and all creation speaks his praise. But let us beware of resting in the mere study of outward things. Lord Bacon quotes a striking sentiment from a platonist as to the danger arising from our senses—"The sense of man carries a resemblance with the sun, which, as we see, opens and reveals all the terrestial globe: but then it again obscures and conceals the stars and celestial globe, so does the sense discover natural things, but it shuts up divine."

The sorrows and afflictions of life are another school in which much is learned, "Where there is much of the cross, there is much light; where there is little of the cross, there is much darkness and much folly. Afflictions make an experienced divine. Rollock, one of the Scotch Reformers, testified, "I am not ashamed to profess that I never reached to so high a pitch in the knowledge of God as I have attained in this sickness." Rivet, a French Protestant, on his dying bed asserted, "In the space of ten days since I kept my bed, I have learned more and made greater progress in divinity than in the whole course of my life before." Sickness brings us near death and eternity, dispels the glare of the world, and thus prepares us to receive in their just importance those revealed truths which we before but dimly discerned, or careless and with indifference regarded.

But especially, let us study the Saviour. The best result of scriptural knowledge is to know Christ. It is most beneficial to ourselves, and most useful to others. Every part of our studies should have some connection with him. He is *the truth*, the sum and substance of all truth. If we know Christ, in the experience of his grace, and by the light of his word, and the teaching of his spirit, we have the key of the mysteries of God's word.

How important to bear in mind that the true way to spiritual light is to follow Christ; (John viii, 12.) and that no learning, research, diligence, or acuteness, can avail, where this is neglected.

What a blessed world would this be, if in all Christians Christ was formed the hope of glory—if we could discern the image of Christ in all and every one around us! Franck says, "O blessed contemplation! Would to God we might thus, with a sedate mind, behold Christ in all others, and that we ourselves may be found a clear and lucid mirror of him."

12. Lastly, *ever remember that God is the Father of lights* and the fountain of wisdom. When we lose sight of him, it is not surprising that we wander into darkness and error. We should begin our reading, lifting up our hearts to him for his blessing, and praying that he will both keep us from error, and guide into all truth. *Bene præcasse est bene studuisse.* To have prayed well, is to have studied well. The importance of pursuing all our studies in the spirit of prayer is very great. We may otherwise be led into errors, puffed up with conceit, fancy that knowledge is all, despise our brethren, and fall into ten thousand evils. It is incredible what mischief has been done by unsanctified learning. The only remedy for this is much prayer for the enlightening, purifying, and humbling work of the Spirit in our hearts. Bishop Sanderson well remarks, (in a Sermon on 1 Cor. xii, 1.) "It was Simon Magus' error to think that the gifts of God might be purchased with money; and it has a spice of his sin, and so may go for a kind of simony, to think that spiritual gifts may

be purchased with labor. You may rise up early and go to bed late, and study hard, and read much, and devour the marrow of the best authors; and when you have done all, unless God give a blessing to your endeavors, be as lean and meagre, in regard of true and useful learning, as Pharaoh's lean kine were, after they had eaten the fat ones. It is God that both ministereth seed to the sower, and multiplieth the seed sown; the principal and the increase are both his. If then we expect any gift or the increase of any gift from him; neither of which we can have without him, let us not be behind either, with our best endeavors to use the means he has appointed, or with our faithful prayers to crave his blessing on those means." He says also, "Prayer without study is presumption, and study without prayer atheism."

Luther declares, that "he profitted more in the knowledge of the Scriptures in a short time by private prayer, than by a long course of application without it." Remember, then, the unspeakable importance of fervent and daily prayer for the Divine blessing on all your studies. Have a firm conviction that God alone can make you a wise and understanding Christian, or be an "able minister of the New Covenant. We are not sufficient with all our studies, plans, and efforts, of ourselves to attain true wisdom, or to make ourselves efficient instruments of his glory. Let us cherish a deep sense therefore of our own incapacity, and daily look to him alone for Divine teaching. He teacheth to profit. It was the pious Hervey's remark, towards the end of his life, "Were I to enjoy Hezekiah's grant, and have fifteen years added to my days, I would be much more frequent in my supplications at a throne of grace. We sustain a mighty loss by reading so much, and praying so little.

The end of all just study is Divine illumination to our own everlasting welfare, and that of our fellow-creatures It was the prayer of the Apostle for his beloved Ephesian converts, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. This is the highest result of all learning. If our studies do not lead us to know Christ; do not increase in us that knowledge, and do not help us in our efforts to make him known to others, a day will come, when they will be found worse than vain and unprofitable: "but every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh to Christ." All-important then is prayer. An hour's prayer may do more for the illumination of the mind than years of study. Every part of our studies should be, then, intermingled with ejaculatory prayer; first, for right knowledge, and then for its right use.

Whatever we may have said of the value of human learning, may all be subordinate to this learning. May the great aim of the writer of these pages, and of every reader, be to attain that knowledge, which makes the possessor himself wise, and fills him with zeal to make all others also, *wise unto salvation.*

CHAPTER X.

*Advice to a Student on entering the University.**

THERE is a large and important class of the community whose case, perhaps, has not been sufficiently attended to: I mean, that of young persons, destined for the most part to fill offices of trust in the church or state, and particularly at the commencement of, or during their undergraduateship in the University.

Whether we contemplate the tide poured in every year, from our public schools, or the influx from private seminaries,—the critical period itself of human life, or the consequences pending upon the issue:—it must be acknowledged, that of all classes, none presents a stronger claim to our consideration;

* This chapter was at the author's request, prepared for this work by the kindness of his beloved brother, the vicar of Acton, in Suffolk.

one more loudly calls for that Christian ounsel, which it is the aim of the pres- nt chapter to administer.

While in fairness it is conceded, that he University affords many advantages or the acquirement of useful knowl- dge; for expanding and invigorating he intellectual powers, and fixing hab- s of application and thinking, which, hrough life, give address, solidity, and tone to the character; it cannot be de- ied, that in no situation is youth more ritically placed; in none has tempta- on a more attractive force, or is Chris- an principle exposed to a severer strug- le. May the young be prepared for he conflict; may temptation be disarmed f its power, by an exposure of the nares of the tempter!

In offering some hints with this view, nd by regard to which the young may naintain the post of fidelity, preserve he line of consistency, and avail them- clves of the facilities for intellectual, vith the least possible risk to their spir- tual advancement;—the Writer gladly dopts the assumption, that his remarks re chiefly intended for, and addressed o *Christian* Students.

The character presented to his mind s that of one whose conviction is on the ide of religious principle; but in whose ase that principle has not yet been sub- nitted to the test of any peculiar trial. t is assumed, that he has been "brought ip in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:" and "from a child has known he Holy Scriptures." And now the pe- iod has arrived, when removed from the vigilant eye and superintendence which controlled and guarded his minority, he s about to be launched into a sea, where his feeble bark will be assailed with fier- cer storms. Though a youth of this de- scription cannot be altogether ignorant of those difficulties and temptations to which Christians are more or less liable n all places, and under all circumstan- ces; yet, may not some particular cau- tions, the fruit, partly of experience, part- ly of a kind interest in his welfare, be furnished, which the Christian Student may have always at hand, to which he may have recourse in the very moment of attack.

Religion, indeed, is a transaction be- tween God and the soul—as the founda- tion of acquaintance and reconciliation —union and converse with the Father of Spirits, is pre-eminently of divine, not human origin. Yet, since all who them- selves partake of the benefit, and possess authority and influence, are laid under a solemn obligation to impart to others the means of its attainment, it is deeply to be lamented, that in any plan, or in any system of instruction, and especially where the education of the young is con- ducted upon so large a scale, religion it- self should ever be regarded as a busi- ness rather secondary and subordinate, than primary and principal.

In the present enlightened day, a con- viction of this deficiency seems to be more and more sensibly felt; and, while learning in general need suffer no depre- ciation, to theological study, it may be hoped, a prominence will be assigned. Within the period of the writer's recol- tion, there has been a considerable and a progressive change for the better, the earnest, perhaps, of one still more mark- ed and decisive.

At present, however, there is reason to apprehend, that, exclusive of a requir- ed and stated attendance upon external observances, the religious advance of the Student in the University, under the di- vine blessing, must, after all chiefly de- pend upon his own individual care and culture.

These observations will not improper- ly introduce the following cautions, which the writer doubts not will be received in the same spirit of candour with which they are offered.

1. *Cultivate the Habit of Personal Religion.* Far be it from the author to impede or interrupt a conscientious and diligent attention to the usual routine of academical study. He has known in- stances, much to the dishonour of relig- ion, and little for the real benefit of its professed advocates, when the paramount claims of religion have been alleged by the student, as a plea for dispensing with the industrious pursuits of merely litera- ry objects. The circumstances ought to be peculiar indeed which would excuse, and much more would justify such a de-

viation: it is one not ill-adapted to uphold the mischievous notion of the incompatibility of learning with piety, or the uselessness of learning to the pious.

If to a Christian student, deeply impressed with a sense of his obligation to consecrate all he is and all he has to his God and Saviour, it should at any time appear hard to employ much time and bestow much pains upon points indirectly, if at all, in their present operation connected with religion; let him reflect that in every station there are others similarly situated, and that it would be quite as unreasonable for a scholar in the University, upon this plea to cast off what belongs to the duty of his station there, as for the husbandman or mechanic, from the like cause, to neglect or renounce their usual occupations.

The cultivation of devotional feeling depends more upon the spirit in which any study is taken up, and the manner in which it is pursued, than upon the study itself.

In cultivating the habit of personal religion, let the student *scrupulously regard all its more retired duties.* In every situation, but especially in the University, this will be indispensable. By this alone the Christian student will be able to unsecularize himself before the work of the day begins, and after it closes. Thus he will keep alive and warm in his breast the flame of devotion, and supply the want of domestic instruction.

By daily self-examination, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, by daily searching and meditating upon the Scriptures, and by a devout recollection of pious absent friends, the principle of spiritual life will be kept from languishing.

In cultivating personal religion, let the student *jealously reserve the Sabbath for its appropriate and all-important avocations.* He who wishes his academical career to be marked with consistent propriety, must habitually act upon the resolution formed and renewed in the strength of divine grace, to employ all the hours of every Sunday according to the design of that sacred institution. With the duties of the Lord's day, none of his ordinary pursuits or studies must be allowed to clash. He must no more permit himself on that day to pursue his secular attainments, than other men in ordinary stations may indulge the like freedom. Never let him plead for that in his own case, which in theirs he would instantly condemn. From this remembrance and reserve of the Sabbath, he may anticipate the happiest result through each successive week, both as it respects his own peace of mind and his progress in religion. Nor will his regard to the sanctity of the Sabbath want a blessing from on high, upon all his other plans and week-day employments. Let the Christian student have it ever imprinted on his mind that God himself is the *fountain of all wisdom*, intellectual and spiritual; and that in Christ, the Master whom he acknowledges, and at whose feet he sits, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Let him honour God, and he shall enjoy the benefit of the promise, "Them that honour me, I will honour."

To fix and strengthen his habit of personal religion, let the student *conduct his secular studies upon Christian motives, and for a religious end.* The law here is as unbending as it is universal, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." A rule, in this world's estimation, impracticable, perhaps unintelligible; but to the Christian not more imperative than pleasant. It is as much his privilege as his interest to "acknowledge God in all his ways," and in all he does, still to tend towards him, as the centre round which he always revolves.

The intellectual powers are improved and strengthened by exercise; and those powers in their highest state of cultivation, the Christian student lays under contribution, and consecrates to the service of the sanctuary. From their religious application and use, even studies unconnected with religion derive a measure of sanctity. As in common life, the Christian master rules, and the servant obeys, as the fellow-servants of Christ; so it is the duty, and will be the wisdom of every Christian student still to have an eye to and a recollection of his Master in heaven. That piety he will find to be most practical which keeps freshest

upon his mind and most habitually in his thoughts the sense of a present God, which invites him to carry every difficulty, of whatever kind, to a throne of grace, there to cast all his care, and there in every thing to make known his requests.

Besides the care to cultivate a devotional habit, let the student, on entering the University,

2. *Observe a special caution in the choice and selection of friends.* The circumstances in which so great a number of young persons are collected together, in commencing at the University, are in this view peculiarly ensnaring. Deprived of a society to which they had been accustomed, there is a mutual and almost resistless attraction, by which those who now find themselves bound upon the same voyage, and embarking at the same port, are drawn into contact. Yet, alas! of this attraction how many are the hapless victims! Insensibly they are urged along with the many; and the event proves not merely injurious to their religious progress, but fatal to their religion.

Before he makes an equivocal choice, let the student seriously reflect how much easier it is, *not to form*, than to *break*, an acquaintance; not to yield to the violent but momentary impulse, than, having yielded, to retract. Among the means to avoid improper associations, none will be found more effectual or simple than a manly but modest avowal, in the outset, of determination to religion. "Show your colours," was the brief advice of an experienced friend, to one just approaching the scene of conflict.

It will be wise to evince early an inflexible purpose of maintaining the character of a Christian student. To observe the regulations prescribed by those in authority; to conciliate their esteem, and win their confidence, by a respectful deference and prompt obedience; may be regarded by the heedless and unthoughtful, as a heavy tax upon the freedom, the independence, and spirit of youth: yet such is the very course which the highest wisdom dictates, to which the conscience bears its strongest testimony, and which experience always proves to be the safest. None are so harassed in the University as the vacillating and unresolved in religion; none endure so many taunts; none are so frequently assailed, nor so much in danger of falling by temptation. It is not meant that the firm and faithful profession of religion will exempt a student from its peculiar trials; but that in proportion as the separation which it exacts is more complete, the severity of these trials will either be abated or less felt. His measure of consolation will bear a just ratio to the strength of his resolution. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." If there is ever a period when the inspired admonition should come with all its force, like a voice from heaven, it is when it falls upon the ear of the Christian student, breathing an infectious atmosphere, and within the precincts of temptation. "I am a companion of all them that fear God and keep his precepts." If ever there is a time when he will derive benefit from his congeniality with this sentiment, it is now. "Depart from me ye evil doers: I will keep the commandments of my God." As he values all that he ought to hold precious, thus let him express both his abhorrence and his determination.

Happily through the vast increase of religious feeling and knowledge every where, the choice here enforced and recommended, has become much more practicable. As an auxiliary to support, or a counsellor to advise; as a sharer of his converse in his leisure, or of his confidence in his retirements; such a coadjutor in all his designs to serve God will at once double the student's joys and divide his griefs.

Nor even, when some ties which cannot be severed, may happen to connect him with others whose minds are not cast into the same mould, must he be negligent to watch the favorable moment of opportunity. Religion is in its own nature diffusive as the light, and the consistent uniform walk of the Christian is an engine of immense power, which seldom fails gradually to produce some corresponding and assimilating result. Religion in its genuine features is too love-

ly, not to engage the notice, and in some degree command the admiration of all its beholders; and if you add to the force of example, the Christian's efforts and prayers, his invincible patience and steady perseverance, his discretion and prudence, his brotherly kindness and charity; what is there which may not be anticipated? The sphere of usefulness in the University must necessarily be contracted; but the extent of that usefulness must not be measured by the smallness of the sphere. Supposing a Christian student to have enjoyed the invaluable blessing of a truly Christian father or preceptor, this might be alleged as a good general rule—"Admit not as an intimate, one whom you could not introduce to that father or preceptor with pleasure or propriety, as *your friend.*" Much might be obviously added upon temptations of other kinds, to which in the University, and amidst so large and mixed an assemblage of the young, the student must inevitably be exposed. But in what has already been advanced he has the antidote. Of the grosser sins of infidelity or profaneness, intemperance or sensuality, the writer would say to those upon whom he has obtruded himself as an adviser—"Let not these things be once named among you. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather," whenever the just occasion calls for it, "reprove them."

There is, however, yet one caution which may with advantage be pressed upon the Christian student, in entering the University, and this respects—

3. *The influence which a circumspect or careless conduct there, will necessarily have upon the whole future life.* Many, alas! who have trifled away the season of opportunity, and forfeited their claim to respect and notice in the University, afterwards have sunk into hopeless neglect, and too late bewailed and smarted for that error. On the contrary, it rarely happens, that those who have conducted themselves conformably to the character of Christian students, have failed to overcome, or outlive, whatever opposition their fidelity at first exposed them to: and to conciliate the favor and regard of those whose friendship has reflected honour upon their after life. In fine, they have usually passed into the world with an "imprimatur," which has given credit and currency to their undertakings; and a bright colouring to all their future prospects.

The question is not one of commanding talents or extraordinary acquirements, but of the responsible cultivation of those talents, and the conscientious use of those means which the individual may happen to possess. "It is accepted according to what a man has." Nor will God leave his servants destitute of such gifts, as will qualify them for the duties assigned to them in his providence, nor yet of grace, to use these gifts to his honour and glory.

If nothing is hinted upon the subject of *recreations*, it is because that subject has nothing in it exclusively applicable to the Christian student. Perhaps, however, it may not be irrelevant to add, that no one should restrict himself in the enjoyment of such abstraction from graver studies; and such a portion of daily exercise, as he will find to be essential to the care and preservation of his health.

The Christian student's best armour of defence against the paralyzing effects of occasional failures in the objects of his literary grasp, will be the religious principles and motives upon which he professes to act. *These* will bind him to perseverance and steadfastness in the path of duty, whether in it he reaps the fruit of success, or is pierced by the thorns of disappointment. *These* will be his ballast, against the rashness of prosperity, and a sweet alleviation to the bitterness in his cup of adversity. As a Christian student, he is answerable, not for success, but for the becoming and Christian allotment and improvement of his time and opportunities.

Remembering then, from whom alone can be derived

"His strength to suffer, and his will to serve,"

let him forcibly and repeatedly press home upon his heart, the truths here concentrated, as it were, in one focus, for

his benefit; though few, not on that account the less weighty, nor the less worthy of his perusal and regard.

In his care to maintain the habit of personal religion he will secure the truest personal enjoyment. In a judicious selection of friends he will best promote his social comfort; and in contemplating the bearing which the present will have upon the future, he will have, perhaps, the strongest merely human motive, to observe such a course of conduct as will cast upon that future, brightness, and not obscurity; and furnish materials for pleasing, not painful retrospection.

Christian student! think on these things, and the God of love and peace be with thee!

A Prayer made and used by the Lord Chancellor Bacon, with which the Christian student may occasionally excite or refresh his own, and the devotion of others:

"O eternal God, and most merciful Father in Christ Jesus, in whom thou hast made a covenant of grace and mercy with all those that come to thee in him: in his name and mediation we humbly prostrate ourselves before the throne of thy mercy seat, acknowledging that by the breach of all thy holy laws and commandments, we are become wild olive branches—strangers to thy covenant of grace; we have defaced in ourselves thy sacred image imprinted in us by creation; we have sinned against heaven and before thee, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. O admit us into the place even of hired servants. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, for thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, who is the way, the truth, and the life: in him, O Lord, we appeal from thy justice to thy mercy, beseeching thee in his name, and for his sake only, thou wilt be graciously pleased freely to pardon and forgive all our sins, and disobedience, whether in thought, word or deed, committed against thy Divine Majesty, and for his precious blood-shedding, death, and perfect obedience, free us from the guilt, the stain, the punishment, and dominion of all our sins, and clothe us with his perfect righteousness. Turn our hearts, O Lord, and we shall be turned; convert us, and we shall be converted. Illuminate the eyes of our minds and understandings with the bright beams of thy Holy Spirit, that we may daily grow in the saving knowledge of the heavenly mystery of our redemption: sanctify our wills and affections by the same Spirit, the fountain of all grace and goodness; reduce them to the obedience of thy most holy will, in the practice of all piety toward thee, and charity towards all men.

"Inflame our hearts with thy love; cast forth of them what displeases thee; all infidelity, hardness of heart, profaneness, hypocrisy, contempt of thy holy word and ordinances; all uncleanness, and whatsoever advances itself in opposition to thy holy will. And grant, that henceforth, through thy grace we may be enabled to lead a godly, holy, sober, and Christian life, in true sincerity and uprightness of heart before thee. To this end, plant thy holy fear in our hearts; grant that it may never depart from before our eyes, but continually guide our feet in thy paths. Increase our weak faith, that it may bring forth the fruit of unfeigned repentance. By the power of the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, may we daily die unto sin; and by the power of his resurrection be daily quickened and raised up to newness of life; may we be truly born anew, and be effectually made partakers of the first resurrection, so that the second death may never have dominion over us.

"Teach us, O Lord, so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Make us ever mindful of our last end, and continually to exercise the knowledge of grace in our hearts, that, finally, we may be translated hence to that kingdom of glory prepared for all those that love and that trust in thee; then and ever let thy holy angels pitch their tents around us, and guard and defend us from the malice of Satan, and from all perils both of soul and body.

"Pardon all our unthankfulness: make us daily more and more thankful for all thy mercies and benefits poured down upon us. Let these our humble prayers ascend to the throne of grace, and be

granted, not only for these mercies, but for whatsoever else thy wisdom knows needful for us, and for all those that are in need, misery, and distress, whom thou, O Lord, hast afflicted in mind, body, or estate. Grant them patience and perseverance in the end, and to the end. And this, O Lord, not for any merits of ours, but for the merits of thy Son, and our Almighty Saviour Christ Jesus, to whom, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed all glory for ever. Amen."

Lord Bacon also wrote another prayer as follows; he entitled it

THE STUDENT'S PRAYER.

"To God the Father, God the Word, God the Spirit, we pour forth most humble and hearty supplications, that he remembering the calamities of mankind and the pilgrimage of this our life in which we wear out days few and evil, would please to open to us new refreshments out of the fountains of his goodness for the alleviating of our miseries. This also we humbly and earnestly beg, that human things may not prejudice such as are divine; neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, any thing of incredulity or intellectual night may arise in our minds towards divine mysteries. But rather that by our mind thoroughly cleansed and purged from fancy and vanities, and yet subject, and perfectly given up to the divine oracles, there may be given up unto faith, the things that are faith's. Amen."

CHAPTER XI.

The Right Application of Religious Knowledge.

Divine knowledge is intended to promote a right state of mind, with a suitable course of conduct. There are two points of main importance in study; one is to get just ideas into the mind, and the other wisely to bring them forth in their season with all their beneficial i fluence. It is not laying up the bale the ware house, but dividing and distr buting it as it is required, that enrich the tradesman.

The apostle in the charge to Timoth to pursue "reading, exhortation, and do trine," or teaching, shows this due orde first to acquire and then to disper knowledge. We too often mistake many ways. We begin to disperse b fore we have acquired; or we acquir and never disperse to others: or we mi apply when we disperse. How nee ful here again is Divine guidance and a sistance.

All our acquirements are valuable a cording to the use which we make them. Supposing then the student have acquired some measure of theologi al knowledge, and to be continually lay ing up in store farther information, let u point out the right application of ever such acquisition. "The tongue of th wise useth knowledge aright: the lip of the wise disperse knowledge." Prov xv, 2, 7. Gifts, and talents, and knowl edge, are blessings, not in the possession but in their appropriate use. There i an awful responsibility connected with them: even the neglect to employ them brings guilt on the soul, and the misuse or abuse of them, produces extended mis chief.

It is the tendency of man's fallen na ture thus to pervert all that God bestows upon him. Every gift however valuable in its right use, often becomes only an engine of mischief in his possession And when so perverted it greatly increas es his danger here, and final woe hereaf ter. The clearer a man's light is here, i unaccompanied by its sanctifying effect the greater will be his future punishment "That servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not, neither did accord ing to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke xii, 47. Let the eye however, be "single, and the whole body shall be full of light." With a single eye like Luther's, a man of learning may be a blessing to the church, and the whol world.

We will first notice, the common abuses of knowledge, and then endeavour to show its right application.*

A common abuse of knowledge is to *rest satisfied with it* as the proper end of study, rather than the means of usefulness. If we have attained real knowledge, we are too apt to suppose the object of pursuit is secured, and we may indolently enjoy it. But this is to look far below the true happiness of the creature. Religious truth is eminently and only valuable as it brings us near to God, and leads us to a more wise and devoted engagement of every faculty in his service. We must no more say of our knowledge, than of our property, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." We are responsible for it as a talent received, and we can only be happy as we are diffusing its blessings to others.

Another great and general abuse is, to foster *a spirit of pride*. Self-elevation is too often the great stimulus to study, and as we make attainments in knowledge, we grow in self-sufficiency, and swell with self-conceit. Where knowledge increases without conversion of heart, that pride which is natural to man, like a disease in the constitution, gathers strength from wholesome food. This disease manifests itself in various ways; sometimes under the garb of humility; sometimes in despising, depressing, or undervaluing the attainments of others. In such a case as Warburton, what arrogance mingles with his learning! how he tramples in his haughtiness over his opponents! The Christian, inspired with his Saviour's Spirit, had rather be trampled upon, than trample upon others. We sometimes see the wise of this world, with haughty contempt cast off God and his truth, with such expressions, "I am above all that nonsense"—"It is cant and hypocrisy"—"Those are your saints." This may now gain them the reputation of great wisdom and discernment; but the scene of this world's glory soon passes away: the hours of sickness and sorrow, the time of death and the judgment-day are at hand; and how will they appear before Christ at his coming? Christian reader, let us remember, "Pride goes before destruction:" and what a fall will it be to the haughty mind, to "awake to shame and everlasting contempt!" This pride leads some to the ostentatious display of knowledge, (Jer. ix, 23.) "It should be our concern," says Francks, "to guard against vain-glory, in a buisness wherein the glory of God should be our only object." We may learn even religion, that we may be able to talk; and we speak of what we know, that we may be admired, and have credit given to us for wisdom, sagacity, and learning. With that deep self-knowledge, humility, and self-distrust, which mark his Private Thoughts, Mr. Adam suggests to his own mind the question, "Whether his reading and pursuit of knowledge had not rather a view to talking, than his own private use, or the benefit of others." This "talk of the lips" is of little real profit, "it tendeth only to penury." It increases not the spiritual riches of those who hear or those who speak. There is always a temptation to make a parade of what we know.

The gratification of vain curiosity, is another abuse connected with the acquisition of knowledge. Is it not usual for some to estimate the value of

* There are some striking remarks of Bernard on the true use of knowledge. Speaking on those words of the apostle, "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," in his 36th Sermon on the Canticles, he says, "Observe how the apostle places the fruit and utility of knowledge in the manner of knowing. What therefore is the mode of knowing? What, unless to know in what order, with what affection, and to what end you should know? In what *order?* that should be first which most tends to salvation. With what *affection?* to be most ardent in that which most strongly excites love. *To what end?* To study, not for vain glory or curiosity, but only for edifying yourself, or your neighbour. There are who wish to know only for the sake of knowing, and it is a base *curiosity*. There are who wish to know that they may be known, and it is a *base vanity*, who do not escape the satirist, "Scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter." And there are those who wish to know, that they may sell their knowledge for money or honor, and this is a *base gain*. But there are those who wish to know, that they may edify, and this is *charity*, and also, there are those who wish to know, that they may be edified, and this is *prudence*. Of all these the two last only are not found in the abuse of knowledge, because they wish to understand for this end, that they may do good."

knowledge not so much by its intrinsic worth, as by its remoteness from common view, and the pains with which it has been acquired? From mere curiosity, without any specific good end in view, men may ransack all sorts and kinds of learning, and enter into the most hidden recesses of antiquity, and yet labor to no profit. Nay, they may carry their researches into the most holy things, (Col. ii, 18,) and attempt to pry into things both that are above their comprehension and hidden from their view, from similar motives and with the like result. Great learning may be the mere self-indulgence of the intellect; the revelry of mental gratification, the mere intoxication of the powers of the understanding. Precious time may be spent over mere learned trifles, extensive learning and vast powers of mind be wasted, or serious error, under the plausible cover of learning, be diffused and strengthened. Men may read, only to become skeptics and latitudinarians.

Another serious abuse of knowledge is to *turn it to the maintenance of error*. Satan tempts us, at many sacrifices, to seek to know *good and evil*, and then endeavors to turn all the knowledge which man acquires to the maintenance of evil. The whole system of Popery is knowledge misapplied and used against the truth. Few have exceeded, in acquisitions of various kinds, the Jesuits of the Roman Church. Some of the Socinians, who deny the Lord that bought them, have had much critical skill. The Lord thus shows, in the strongest light, that a man may have skill, talent and industry, and yet fall short of the truth; he must have also divine grace, giving him a humble and teachable spirit, and guiding him, that he may be led into the truth, or the result of his studies will be vain and unprofitable.

Men begin at the wrong end; instead of humbling themselves to become fools in their own eyes, that they may be wise (1 Cor. iii, 18;) they profess themselves to be wise, without seeking to be taught of God, and so in reality they become fools (Rom. i, 22;) and the mysteries of the gospel, which are revealed to others who have the simplicity of babes, are hid from them. Matt. xi, 28. There i considerable danger in reading erroneou books. The spirit of a man gets a taste as it were, of the mind of the author with whom he is most conversant, jus as the stream gets tinged with the soi through which it passes. Infidel, Socin ian, Roman Catholic, or controversia works, may thus, communicate a tain of their respective errors, to those wh dwell much in such regions. Let us al remember the direction, "Buy the truth and sell it not." It is worth every thing we have to procure it, and it should no be parted with for any worldly considera tion. Many things will be offered to tempt you to part with it; "love of ease, applause, favor of men—the titles of a sensible man, a liberal man, no enthusiast, no bigot—worldly gain and promotion;" but it is a losing bargain to part with truth and maintain error at any price.

Another abuse of knowledge is when it *fosters bitterness against our fellow creatures*. If any differ from us, and maintain that difference by arguments opposed to our own, and tending to the undervaluing of our learning, how apt are we to think hardly of them, to disparage them, to suggest uncharitable reasons for their maintenance of such opinions, and, where we have the power, to deal severely with them. Theological hatred has passed into a proverb. Nor is it wonderful that, in proportion to the magnitude of things disputed, there should be an earnestness in contending for them, and in unchristian hearts, an excess of an unchristian spirit. This should be checked in every practicable method. It was a good plan of Antonius at the Halle University, while showing how to rebut error, to make a point of being very careful not to use harsh and unkind expressions, lest his auditors should be inspired with any bitterness against an opponent. In order to remove all such contentions as partook of hatred and selfishness, he laid open the depth of our natural corruption, from whence proceeds all manner of delusion; depraved reason, impregnated with the spirit of self-love, and raised up by unmortified passions, being generally the principle from which has sprung, and

still springs up, such a multitude of erroneous notions. Hence he taught that none should over-value himself on account of some better apprehensions in matters of religion, since the seed of the most abominable heresies lies lurking in every soul, and if not timely restrained by a principle of grace, is ready to break out into error of every kind.

Learning is also abused when it is made an excuse for *needless eccentricity* and peculiarity. Diligent students sometimes want acquaintance with the common affairs of the world, and excuse themselves for a disregard of the ordinary observances and proprieties of social life, by their superiority in literary attainments. Christianity, however, meeting every failure of man, has its beautiful directions, "be courteous, honor all men; whatsoever things are lovely (as well as those which are honest, just and pure,) whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." The remarks of a statesman (the duke of Newcastle,) though only bringing forward worldly motives, suggest some important hints here. He says, "Knowledge alone is not our proper happiness. Men of deep research and of curious inquiry should just be put in mind not to mistake what they are doing. But we may all remember, that as the love of letters may make us unsociable, so the love of society may make us illiterate. The want of discretion and prudence has ruined more men of learning and genius than the time would allow me to mention. Without this sobriety of intellect nothing is strong, nothing is great. Without this prudence, without this discernment of time and circumstance, and the habit of regularity, without an attention to the decencies of society, and of common life, and of the principles by which all men however gifted must indiscriminately be conducted, all our attainments are nothing worth: they will never procure us esteem and respectability among men. The world will but smile at such scholars; and ministers (of the state,) when called upon to promote them, will tell you not without reason, *They are not producible.*" The Christian student will however, from far higher motives than esteem and respectability among men, give no needless offence in any thing, and seek not to please himself, but all men, to their edification.

One more abuse may be noticed, that of *overvaluing particular parts of religious knowledge.* Thus some press attention to languages, some to criticism, some to evidences, some to doctrines, some to practice, beyond the fair proportion due to each, and attending almost exclusively to one thing, undervalue what they do not follow. Each point has its relative value, as bearing upon one grand result; and it is the part of wisdom to attend to each according to its real worth and connexion with the whole. Undoubtedly our particular talents, bent of mind, opportunities, and occasions, may call for peculiar attention to some distinct branch of religion, and when duly pursued, there is an advantage in this to the general advancement of the whole; yet we may pursue that branch to the disparagement of other even more important. Let each have its scriptural proportion of regard, and let us not spend our time in settling various readings, for instance, to the neglect of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Having thus shown the abuses, a few observations may be added on the *right application of knowledge.* The right end of study is not to raise us on an eminence to be admired; to enable us to swell with our own fancied elevation; to delight or enrich ourselves with our own intellectual stores; to gain promotion and worldly advantage. Success here may be an injury; and of students pursuing and gaining only such ends we are compelled to say, "Verily they have their reward." Solomon gives a striking estimate from experience of the vanity of misapplied knowledge—"my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge, and I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly, I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. Ecc. i, 16—18. How infinitely superior are the true ends, the illumination of the mind with divine and saving truth, the

consequent purification of the heart and life, fresh abilities of usefulness to our fellow-creatures, a fresh revenue of praise and glory to God, and a growing communion with him, and preparation for heavenly and everlasting communion hereafter. When there is a natural taste for intellectual improvement, it is most important to have the knowledge of evangelical theology, or as the apostle would call it, "the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phil. iii, 8.) set before us, as the great means by which the Divine Spirit raises us to our highest happiness. Let us then more distinctly direct the student to the right application of his acquirements.

The first use of theological study is to bring you *acquainted with God in Christ Jesus.* Theology of the right kind, duly improved, leads directly to constant communion with God. It embraces Christian doctrines to arrive at the knowledge of God, and Christian rules to direct our walk with him and before him. They are just sentiments of Bishop Taylor, when fairly interpreted, "Theology is rather a divine life than a divine knowledge. When all books are read, and all arguments are examined, and all authorities alleged, nothing can be found to be true that is unholy." "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace with him." Real growth in divine knowledge gives a fuller insight into the character and glories of our Creator, our relation to him, the blessings which we receive from him, and the duties which we owe to him, as our reconciled Father in Jesus Christ.

By the fall we lost the knowledge of God. Divine knowledge fulfills its highest end, when it leads us to Jesus Christ, by whom we are recovered from the ruinous effects of that first sin.

Dr. Owen, pressing the importance of the knowledge of Christ, gives some valuable suggestions respecting the scope of human learning. "The particular end of literature, though not observed by many, men's eyes being fixed on false ends, which compels them in their progress to wander from the object, is none other but to remove some part of the curse which is come upon us by sin. Learning is the product of the soul's struggling with the curse for sin. Adam at his first creation, was completely furnished with all that knowledge (excepting only things not then in being, &c.) as far as it lie in a needful tendency to the utmost end o man, which we now press after. There was no straitness, much less darkness or his understanding, that should make him sweat for a way to improve, and make out those general conceptions of things which he had. All this being lost by sin a multiplication of tongues also being brought in as a curse for an after rebellion, the whole design of learning is but to disentangle the soul from the issue o sin. Ignorance, darkness, and blindness is come upon the understanding; acquaintance with the works of God, spiritual and natural, is lost, strangeness of communication is given by the multiplication of tongues. Tumultuating of passions and affections with innumerable darkening prejudices are also come upon us. To remove and take this away, to disentangle the mind in its reasonings, to recover an acquaintance with the works of God, to subduct the soul from under the effects of the curse of division of tongues, is the aim and tendency of literature."

Dr. Owen then shows the insufficiency of mere learning for the attaining of these ends, and the swelling pride of men of great literary attainments, asking, are we blind also? and observes, "He that has attained to the greatest height of literature, yet if he has nothing else, if he have not Christ, is as much under the curse of blindness, ignorance, stupidity, and dulness, as the poorest, silliest soul in the world. The more abilities the mind is furnished with, the more it strengthens itself to act its enmity against God. All that it receives does but help it to set up high thoughts and imaginations against the Lord Christ." Owen adds, "I hope I shall not need to add any thing to clear myself for not giving a due esteem and respect unto literature, my intendment being only to cast it down at the feet of Jesus Christ, and to set the crown upon his head."

The glory of religious knowledge, then, is Christ Jesus, the Son of God made man for our salvation: to know him,

"the way, the truth, and the life." As Leighton, in his usual happy strain remarks, "You, then, that are gazing on vanity, be persuaded to turn your eyes this way and behold this lasting wonder, this Lord of life dying! But the most, alas! want a due eye for this object. It is the eye of faith alone that looks aright on him. and is daily discovering new worlds of excellency and delight in this crucified Saviour; that can view him daily as hanging on the cross, without the childish gawdy help of a crucifix, and grow in the knowledge of that love that passeth knowledge, and rejoice itself in frequent thinking and speaking of him, instead of those idle and vain thoughts, at the best, and empty discourses, wherein they most delight and wear out the day. What is all knowledge but painted folly in comparison of this?" See 1 Pet. ii, 21.—If knowledge lead us not to Christ for ourselves, and to magnify Christ for others, it does nothing for us. Its great use is to discover God to man, by Christ Jesus, and thus to lead us to constant communion with God. No theology was more profound than that which Enoch attained when he walked with God.*

Religious knowledge is to be used, not merely for accumulating the sentiments of others, but also for *enlarging and extending the powers of our mind.* The influence of the well-directed study of Divine truth, is most important in enlightening the understanding, and regulating the judgment. It gives a correct taste, and enables us to discern and approve the things that are most excellent. There can be no reason why a spiritual man, as well as others, should not improve the powers of his mind, and there are many why he should. Every thing that strengthens his power of mind, gives him advantage for the deeper and more meditative study of sacred truth, a greater capacity under the divine blessing for the intelligent reception of it, and for a more established maintenance of it for his own comfort. Eph. iv. 19.

Those who have watched the operations of the mind, will have observed, that other men's thoughts give rise to fresh views of truth in our own minds. Let these, where scriptural and useful, be carefully retained and used, cultivated and employed for the glory of God and the good of others. Theology, like prayer, should be inwrought. James v, 16. The mere transcript of the ideas of others will always have the defects of speaking a foreign language, with which we are but partially acquainted: we can never give the sentiments in full force and beauty. But let us make what we learn our own, let us meditate upon it, digest and incorporate it with our own mind, and it will become natural and easy, weighty, powerful, and original.

Another true application of knowledge is to *assist us to a holy conduct.* Let us be careful that our knowledge be not only rational but *practical;* not only clear, but *vivifying.* It is not the accuracy but the vitality of knowledge that influences the heart to present duty, and guides into the enjoyment of present privilege. It must be "the light of life" (John viii, 12,) else the light that is in us is darkness, and how great is that darkness! Matt. vi, 23. How affecting to see knowledge so often unaccompanied with vitality, no impression of Divine influence, no perception of spiritual things, no enjoyment of heavenly consolation. We would not indeed disparage rational knowledge. It is indispensable as a medium of communicating the more excellent blessing, and without some measure of it, there could be no natural capacity for the reception of spiritual truth: as a foundation may be without a superstructure, but not a superstructure without a foundation. But while we admit its necessity, we deny its sufficiency. It is only the door, the entrance to that better knowledge, which is sufficient as well as necessary—that knowl-

* An apparent difficulty in a sentence of our Lord's leads to a most important truth. John xvi, 23. "In that day ye shall ask (or question) me nothing, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask (or pray) the Father in my name, he will give it you." In the day when they should have fuller light, and had not need to put the questions (ver. 19) which he had been meeting, still it would be needful to abound in prayer. Times of light and knowledge should be times of prayer; and the true use of knowledge is to lead us to much prayer; to high and holy intercourse with our heavenly Father.

edge that is the effect of Divine influence, and introduces us to a vital union with our God and Saviour. 1 John v, 20. O let us ever remember the emptiness of all stores of knowledge short of this, and let us seek for it as efficacious, transforming into his image, and making us meet for his presence, who is Light, and in whom is no darkness *at all.* All doctrines have, when rightly received, a practical influence. The atonement is not revealed to lessen, but to increase our dread of sin: election is not declared that we may be careless about sin, but that we may never be satisfied till we are holy; the precious promises are not given to make us negligent and worldly, but partakers of the Divine nature. The excellent Robert Boulton could to his comfort on his death-bed profess, that he never in his sermons taught any thing but what he had first sought to work on his own heart.

Be sure what you are learning, and be not like those who were "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Tim. iii, 7. Such persons, upon the first flight of imagination, will leave evangelical truth for any fancy that flits across their path. Vitringa's words in summing up the uses of the study of prophecy, may well be applied here, "They teach us God, and the true perfections of his nature, they explain the reasons of that admirable providence which he exercises in governing the world and the church, they deeply impress every where the highest reverence of his Divine majesty and justice, they shake off torpor and that epidemic lethargy, by which most men miserably perish fast asleep, they stimulate the mind to true virtue and holiness, they not only recall and withdraw, but also deter us from all vices; every where they persuade to penitence and faith, the necessary means of salvation, and not only to fly from sin, but also to abhor it. They build up and commend a good conscience; they terrify an evil one, so that he who reads them perceives that a present God is with him. Wherefore we must with the Apostle say, Therefore, brethren, earnestly follow prophecy." Thus also the Holy Scriptures, and all the parts of theological knowledge are full of truths calculated to lead us to God, and quicken us in his service.

Another use is, that it is a great *help to the further understanding of the Bible.* Cecil justly observes in his Remains, "A man ought to call in from every quarter whatever may assist him to understand, explain, and illustrate the Bible." Here is the high office of theology. Let all our knowledge of every kind, not merely pay tribute to the Bible, but be pursued with a direct intention of more fully elucidating Divine truth. As languages, arts, and sciences, oriental customs, history, chronology, &c. receive light from the Bible, so a knowledge of them helps us to a better understanding of that blessed book. There is an extent of wisdom and learning in the Scriptures, which every fresh degree of knowledge enables us still farther to penetrate and explore to our own edification, and the good of all around us. Brevity is throughout connected with inexhaustible fulness. One of the highest ends of knowledge is to lay open the riches of Scripture for our full use and enjoyment. Beauties, and excellencies, and advantages, which the ignorant cannot discern, are enjoyed by the intelligent Christian. Christians ought not therefore to be satisfied with a mere sufficiency of knowledge for salvation. Even good people are apt indolently to say of many important views of Christian Theology, "Let us leave these things to divines, and employ ourselves in the simple views, and practical duties of the gospel." But the proper end for which our powers were given, was the attainment of the knowledge of God. In this is a field of infinite extent and most interesting to *all Christians* according to their capabilities of improvement. And after having occupied themselves to the fullest extent of their powers and opportunities, and with growing interest in every stage of their progress, they will still leave enough in this deep and inexhaustible subject for the investigation of all the schools of the ablest theologians, to the end of the world. The different parts of truth are thus connected, harmonized, and illustrated. One part of Scripture throws light upon another.

They must all be known and compared. "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual," is the right use of that wisdom "which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

It has a further use as *a guard against error of every kind.* There are always multiplied and opposing schemes, opinions, and systems, floating all around us, and though the spiritual perception which is the result of Divine teaching, will keep a Christian clear of ruinous error, yet he may be surprised and brought into great mistakes, and mislead others, and endure much sorrow from want of that better information which more knowledge would have given him. By knowledge he will acquire firmness and stability of character, so as not to be shaken in mind, and moved about with every wind of doctrine. In every age, he will see the evils which errors have produced, the fruits and blessings of truth, and thus be preserved from hastily adopting novelties at first sight plausible and attractive. This indeed supposes piety and humility, otherwise learning, as we have seen, may be the fruitful source of error.

Another right application of theology is *to make us humble.* True it is, that the danger of any acquisition, and especially of one so valuable as Divine knowledge, is that of self-elation; but its right and proper improvement is humility; its just effect is lowliness of mind. Seeing how pure, and holy, and glorious God is, how spiritual his law, how rich his grace, how fallen, and needy, and ruined man by nature is, we possess the very elements of that genuine humility which the Saviour pronounces to be blessed. Who, with a Christian mind, can look back on past ages and survey the multiplied errors of past days, and notice how the very best and the greatest of men have in some point or other failed, without learning many lessons of diffidence and self-distrust. The more we know, the more we shall see there is to be known, and we shall be astonished at our confidence on points in past years, where now we see far more darkness than we were then aware of. "If any man thinketh that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." True wisdom and humility go together—"with the lowly is wisdom." And how inestimable the value of real humility. A friend of Andrew Fullers', to whom he had made heavy complaints of himself, wrote thus, and he deeply valued the letter. "God Almighty keep us from ever being great men, or rather from thinking ourselves so! Oh, it requires numberless miracles to get any man to heaven; perhaps I might say, especially a minister. You will do as long as you feel vile, and foolish, and weak. I had rather preach at your funeral, than live to see you good, and wise, and great, and strong in your own estimation.*

The *right direction of our acquirements* is another important part of the use of knowledge. It is obvious that excellent men have failed, by a misdirection of their talents to such subjects as they were not competent to discuss. Erasmus was invaluable as an agent in the advancement of literature, and exposing the folly and wickedness of the monks; but when he attacked Luther, and the principles of Reformation, he was out of his province. Bishop Bull, in defence of the divinity of Christ, brings the vast stores of antiquity which he had acquired powerfully to bear against the opponents of this doctrine; but on an experimental question like that of justification, he rather covers it with obscurity, than places it in scriptural light. Grotius excelled in classical literature, in his rights of war and peace, in his truths of Christianity; but we cannot go along with him in his views of the gospel of the grace of God. We should learn to pray much, not only for heavenly wisdom to discern the truth, but also to apply the gifts which God has bestowed upon us in that channel that may do most good. It is a happy manifestation of the right application of acquirements, when an author's later publications are manifestly more spiritual, evangelical, and heavenly-minded than his earlier ones; and you see in his course "the path of the just as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Owen's Meditations on the the Glory of Christ, and Baxter's Dying Thoughts, furnish specimens of this maturity of Christian light and love.

* See Ryland's Life of Fuller.

Knowledge is rightly improved when it becomes a *means of grace*. The Apostle prays for believers, "grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. That knowledge is most useful which has most tended to purify and rectify our affections and conduct, which has brought us nearest to Christ in deep humiliation and earnest longings for his salvation. The knowledge of which we speak has this direct tendency in all its parts: under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit it quickens and sanctifies. The Christian will thus very advantageously study books of practical piety, and holy and experimental works, and thereby his various graces will be fostered and advanced. As it has pleased God to accompany the preaching of his ministers with the power of his Spirit, so also Christian instruction, when reduced to writing, and read in private, is attended with the similar Divine influences, and truly nourishes the soul with heavenly manna. It is the high and eminent use then of theology, not merely to fill the head with notions, but to edify the heart; to be a grand means of holiness, and a main instrument of the Divine mercy for transforming the soul, and renewing it in knowledge after the image of God. "Sanctify them through thy truth." There is not a truth of sound theology, but it has a sanctifying tendency. The words of David, (Psalm xix, 7—11,) are very full on this point. Christian reader, "Be not satisfied with *how much* thou knowest; but see what effect the knowledge which thou hast attained has upon thy heart and life?" The mark of true discipleship is love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples"—not, that ye have talents and learning, but—"that ye love one another."

Knowledge is further useful to *guide us in difficulties*. Perplexing cases often arise, and the same errors, having their origin in the natural blindness of the heart, are frequently revived under fresh names. In these and other difficulties, the former experience of the servants of Christ, and an enlarged scriptural knowledge will furnish much help to guide us aright. When Christian love abounds "in all knowledge and all judgment," we shall "approve things that are excellent," and shall "be sincere, and without offence." Solomon asserts, that "the wisdom of the prudent is to direct his way." Prov. xiv, 8. Nor is there any wisdom so important as to be wise unto salvation, nor any prudence greater than that which leads us to attend supremely to the one thing needful. A wise Christian who has taken a large survey of the Church, and of the various parts of divinity, has many advantages for speedily forming a judgment on dubious cases, and marking the true limits of every case.

Again, it is eminently useful when it is employed *to advance the salvation of our fellow creatures*. Next to being wise to our own salvation is that wisdom which he possesses who "winneth souls." Prov. xi, 30. The figure of an intelligent Christian and Christian teacher, is that (Matt. xiii, 52,) of a well furnished householder; not a miser hoarding his treasures, but bringing them out. It is the invariable character of the Divine economy, that no man is blessed for himself, but as a vehicle of communication of blessing to others. Abraham was blessed that he might be a blessing. Gen. xii, 2. So the Jews. Psalm lxvii, 1, 2. Talents are given, not to be carefully hid, but diligently traded with, for the good of others. Compare the parable of the talents with the solemn account of the day of reckoning. Matt. xxv, 14—46. Many are the advantages which the intelligent Christian possesses. He has an overflowing spring within of life-giving waters, the streams of which may diffuse themselves, and spread fertility all around. In the varied intercourse of man with his fellow men, he has always a treasury of the best kind, and may bring out of that treasury things new and old. In the social circle, as "iron sharpeneth iron, so" especially such "a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." With his family, the husband dwells with his wife according to knowledge, he trains up his children in the way they should go, and he benefits his servants by domestic instruction. In his walks with his associates, by the sick

beds of the afflicted, among the cottages of the poor, and with the children of the Sunday school, what means the instructed Christian has of promoting their best, even their everlasting good! He stops the contagion of error and vice, and he infuses the counteracting principles, the very elements of truth and goodness. Then are we using knowledge, then are we not merely preparing to live, but really living, when we are guiding the humble inquirer, relieving the afflicted conscience, checking the progress of sin and infidelity, and exciting all around us to holiness and usefulness. In teaching we are taught. Well do we improve knowledge, when we follow the Apostle's advice to Timothy, "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The immense importance of this application of knowledge may be seen in the instance of Luther. Dr. Chalmers observes that, 'through the medium of the press and by virtue of scholarship alone, Luther bore with greater weight than did all his coadjutors, on the living history of the world; and, after all, it was from the cell of studious contemplation, from the silent depository of a musing and meditative spirit, there came forth the strongest and most widely-felt impulse on the mechanism of human society."

Its most just application, however, is enabling us *to glorify God*. Every thing is really of use, as it tends to promote this great end of our being. The creature best fulfills the end of its creation, when it most exalts the Creator. This then is the chief scope of religious knowledge. That it tends to this may be seen not only in the uses already pointed out, but also in its enabling us to discern the divine glory in the truths and ways of God, and thus to declare and illustrate, defend and maintain that glory in all our intercourse with our fellow-creatures. David first prays "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name." And then adds, "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, I will glorify thy name for evermore." The doctrine of a crucified Saviour, for instance, is "to the Greek foolishness, and to the Jew a stumbling block," but to the instructed Christian, it is "the wisdom of God and the power of God." God shines "in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." When our minds are illuminated with heavenly light, we discern something of the wisdom and the glory of this divine scheme of mercy, and we are able for ourselves to behold and rejoice in this glory, and then with all earnestness and affection to declare it to others. When Nebuchadnezzar was brought to the knowledge of himself and his God, he addressed all the nations, saying, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extol, and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment." God is most dishonoured where ignorance most prevails. The want of knowledge brings in idolatry, (Isa. xlv, 20,) and every evil work, (Psalm xiv, 4.) Fruitfulness glorifies God, (John xv, 8,) and all spiritual blessings abound through the knowledge of God and Christ, (2 Pet. i, 2, 3.) As the angelic host have the greatest knowledge, so is their knowledge wholly used to glorify the Divine Being, and their song forever is, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever." Even the knowledge of the creature and of earthly things may, as we see in the works of Boyle, and Ray, and Derham, be used to the manifestation of the Divine wisdom and glory; and much more should that which relates to intelligent spirits, and the mind and purposes and will of the great Sovereign of all worlds respecting their present and final condition. The more we discover of these things in a right spirit, the more we shall abase ourselves in the dust before God, and admire and set forth the Divine glory through our life. We shall enter with all our hearts in to the Apostle's conclusion of his survey of the Christian scheme, "O the depth, (Rom. xi, 33—36,) and be prepared for those beautiful lessons of Christian godliness, with which he follows out that conclusion. Rom. xii.

We may lastly notice among the right uses of theology, *a due preparation for our final happiness.* "We may reasonably suppose that all the endeavours which we employ upon earth to know God, shall not be lost to us in heaven, and that they who in this world shall acquire the best knowledge of him will have, at their entrance into the habitations of glory, the qualities most requisite for seeing him as he is." Divine knowledge is the very beginning of heaven. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." If men perish for lack of knowledge, and for the abuse of knowledge, there is also a right use of knowledge by which our everlasting welfare may be furthered. "The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it." Eccles. vii, 12. It teaches what no other science does, the state of things beyond the grave; it shows us the judgment to come, the woe of hell and the bliss of heaven; and directs us to a safe and satisfactory preparation for those eternal realities, that we may escape the eternal evil, and obtain boundless and never-ceasing good. All other knowledge has either this defect, that it relates only to this life, or in its best aspect is but subservient to divine knowledge. This it is that immediately and at once raises us above earthly things to higher and better regions, opens to us the gates of everlasting life, introduces us to the society of glorious spirits in the heavenly mansions, conducts us to the court of the King of kings, and never leaves us till it brings us to dwell before his throne for ever and ever. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. i, 9. "In thy light shall we see light." Psalm xxxvi, 9.

Such are some of the right uses of theology. You will see that however some kinds of knowledge may be beneficial for common life, others beneficial and interesting to the mind, such as science, &c. this is not only more useful and interesting than any other, but also indispensably necessary for our present and everlasting happiness. Let us inquire then whether we are thus improving our acquisitions in divine truth. Do they bring us nearer to God? Do they open to us the Scriptures? Do they guard us against error? Do they make us humble? Do we find them means of grace? Are we using them to advance the salvation of others and to glorify God? Are we by them becoming more meet for the heavenly inheritance?

It is a sad and miserable mistake, to consider attainments merely as a ground of self-elevation, and thus to be puffed up with them; they should rather be viewed as a talent for which we are accountable, as a trust in the occupation of which we are bound to be faithful. In this view indeed we shall see that they increase our responsibilities and enlarge our duties; but blessed be God they also increase the power and the high privilege of doing good to others, as well as the means of enjoying good in our own happy experience.

Christian student, then, be not only diligent in acquiring* divine knowledge, but be watchful to use and employ every acquisition for the divine glory. This will repay every sacrifice of vain pleasure, every indulgence of mere indolence, every conflict with worldly temptation. But never forget that for this profitable use of knowledge you especially need divine assistance. "I am the Lord which teacheth thee to profit." Augustine observes, that the prophet here mentions utility, and not subtilty, as the end of divine teaching. The Apostle sums up what we have said, in this prayer for his converts—"That ye might be filled with

* Do not satisfy yourself with the knowledge that is thrown in your way, but search for it in humility, diligence, faith and prayer, in every field which the gracious providence of God has opened to you. In such a day as this, excellent helps are within the reach of all. New and perhaps improved helps offer themselves almost every day. Do not be satisfied with a few helps in the way of books, which have lain by you for years past, and are now become old and wearisome, but consider it an obligation of Christian duty to some extent at least, to deny yourself both in money and time that you may avail yourself of those important advantages of increasing in the knowledge of God, in the perception of his glory, in the obedience to his will, and preparation for his kingdom.

he knowledge of his will in all wisdom nd spiritual understanding, that ye might valk worthy of the Lord unto all pleas- ng, being fruitful in every good work, nd increasing in the knowledge of God."

CHAPTER XII.

Jesus Christ, *the chief and the best teacher of his people.*

Having dwelt so much on human writings, the author feels that it will be refreshing to himself, and he hopes to his readers, in the close of his work, o turn our minds from human writings o the great Teacher, who came from God himself, and lives for ever as the Counsellor of his Church. May every heart be raised to him, who was foretold as the Prophet like unto Moses, and who is still with his Church as its Guide, and Leader, and Teacher. In the words of the martyred Ridley, "Christ biddeth us to ask and we shall have. Therefore, O heavenly Father, the Author and Foun- tain of all truth, the bottomless sea of all understanding, send down, we beseech thee, thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, and lighten our understandings with the beams of thy heavenly grace. We ask this, O merciful Father, not in respect of our deserts, but for thy dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ's sake."

When a human teacher reflects on his own ignorance and weakness, and the immense moment of right instruction in the things of God, it is an inexpressible consolation to his mind, to be able to re- fer all who listen to him to One who can supply every deficiency, and to assure them that none who follow *Him* shall fail of reaching at last the heavenly man- sions.

And delightful it is to the humble spirit of the true Christian, to receive all from this Divine Mediator. If he could do without divine teaching, if he could by his own efforts, without the wisdom which comes from above, become truly wise unto salvation, his Saviour's plan pleases him better, he had rather receive the gift as he does now through a Media- tor; for thus it becomes a token of divine love, and a consoling evidence of his Father's favor and kindness to him.

We have already, in the third chapter of this work, explained the general na- ture of divine teaching; we would now view the subject in its immediate con- nexion with our Lord's office as the Prophet and Teacher of his Church.

We notice first *his Divine appoint- ment* to this office. It was foretold by Moses, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." Isaiah in the name of Jehovah directs the attention of the Church to him, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit up- on him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." In the fulness of time this great prophet came, and in person declared, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." When he had accomplished his work of redemption, and was risen to his original glory, he sent his Holy Spirit on his Apostles, filled them with divine wisdom, and called them to testify that he was the Prophet of whom Moses had spoken. Acts iii, 22; vii, 37. The Father ap- points him to this office, and the Spirit endows him with all requisite gifts to fulfill it, (Isa. xi, 1—5,) and acts as his agent in carrying on his work, (John xvi, 7—15, and the result of this Divine ap- pointment shall be, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa. ix, 9.

His *qualifications* for this office, which are peculiar and complete, may next be pointed out.

He is an *all-wise Teacher*. He has infallible wisdom. However pious hu- man teachers may be, however disposed to assist us, none are wholly free from ignorance and error; it is not so with Christ; "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and this for us: he is "made of God unto us wis-

dom." He not only knows what is in man, but in the Father also. Matt. xi, 27. The Divine Spirit is given by measure to man; it is given without measure to the great Mediator; (John iii, 34.) and "the Spirit of the Lord" that rests upon him is "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord." Look at the displays of this wisdom when he was upon earth; with what authority and distinctness, with what love and tenderness he instrueted his followers; how he baffled all the tricks and subtility of Scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians; how ably he solved the artful questions about the tribute-money, the doctrine of the resurection, and the woman taken in adultery, leaving a holy lesson, and removing all the fancied difficulties; how wisely he taught his disciples as they were able to bear it, and opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures; what depths of wisdom are there in his parables and discourses! He is still the same all-wise Teacher. He knows every circumstance. He knows every heart. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

He is *an experienced Teacher*. He has himself practised all his lessons. He has learned in the school of experience the truths which he teaches. Human instructors are often inefficient, because they have had little experience; we all more or less fail, as we say and do not. It is a most humbling and affecting proof of our fall, that we can clearly discern and expose the fault of another, at the very time that we are blind to our own commission of the same fault; we can admit correct notions without their becoming living principles; but it is the peculiar glory of this Teacher that there is not an excellence which he sets before us in instruction that is not in full perfection in himself, and that he has not set before us in his own life; and this not merely in prosperous circumstances; he has known want and poverty, he has gone through darkness and temptation, he has been in deep sorrow and extreme suffering; "though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." The Saviour first did and then taught. Acts i, 1, Matt. xi, 29. His early life in his father's business as a carpenter, is full of sweet instructiou to the humble Christian. We think that it is of great value to have the advice of an experienced Christian, and so it is; but let us not fail to look still higher. All Christians may have the advantage of that experience which the Saviour's unequalled temptations and sufferings have given to him. This gives him such sympathy with his people, that "in all their afflictions he is afflicted." He has again long exercised this gracious office. Look at the scholars of his school. Mark the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the blessed band of the Reformers, and the holy Church, in ages past; they were all under his teaching. He has already guided thousands and millions safely home; he has lost none of them that were given unto him; he rejects none that come unto him; let us also go that we may have life.

He is *a kind Teacher*. Sometimes human teachers are harsh and severe; sometimes they do not like to be interrupted; sometimes they are dogmatic, proud, and negligent. But Jesus is mild and gentle, meek and lowly, kind and faithful. It is delightful to mark his readiness to instruct while on earth; when he was weary, when he wished for retirement, when they followed him into his secret retreats, when he had not time so much as to eat bread, when even little children were brought to him, he never once refused to teach. Blessed Saviour, may we imitate thy unwearied love! How precious are thy words, "Come unto me all ye that are weary—take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Read the 8th chapter of Proverbs, and in the invitations of wisdom see a beautiful picture of the willingness of Christ to instruct. See how graciously he promises. Psalm xxxii, 8. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." Look at his life; though he speaks with au-

thority, yet it is the authority of truth and love, as well as of power and dominion; it is all marked by inexpressible kindness, and patience, and tenderness. How wonderful his patience in bearing with the unbelief and dulness, the prejudices and perverseness of his disciples; what allowances he made for them, and how readily he pardoned, and again received them!

Once more, *he is an abiding Teacher.* It was his last promise on earth to his Church, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Human teachers can give but short lessons and they are gone. However much we may sometimes desire their counsel, there are seasons when they cannot come to us, and we cannot go to them. He is ever present, and the Christian can say that "He will be our guide unto death." When in the midst of enemies, and under the most perplexing difficulties for his name's sake, we can, without the possibility of man's interference, realize the presence of this Teacher, apply to him, and hold communion with him; and he will give a mouth and wisdom which all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist. Happy are Christians, the pupils of the Teacher who has promised, "I will never leave thee nor for sake thee; and who may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me."

From this view of his qualifications we must conclude, that he is an *unparelleled* Teacher: he has a fitness for this office that is quite unequalled. All the glories of his person as God and man, all the titles which he bears, all the endowments with which he is enriched as our Mediator, and all the offices which he has undertaken, eminently, and without a rival, qualify him to be *the prophet.* He is God, and therefore omniscient and omnipresent; he can counsel the thousands of his Israel in all ages and places, and at one and the same instant direct and lead them; nothing can be hid from him: he is man, and therefore can descend to and sympathize with human infirmity. The union and combination of his varied names show his peculiar qualifications; he is the chief "Bishop, the Bright and Morning Star, the Counsellor, the Faithful Witness, the Guide, the Lawgiver, the Light of the world and the Light of Life, the Shepherd, the Sun of Righteousness, the true Solomon, the Teacher come from God, the Truth, the Word of God, and the Wisdom of God." What an unparalleled Teacher is here! How long shall his people be clouded under the mists and darkness of human errors, because they come not to that better Instructor, who alone "teacheth to profit." Isaiah xlviii, 17. Let us too remember that he has assumed no office which he will not adequately fulfill; "faithfulness is the girdle of his reins." We may entirely depend on him for the due and full use of his endowments: "he is faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was faithful in all his house;" but in a vastly superior, in an unparalleled degree: Moses "as a servant;" with human defects; "Christ as a son over his own house," and though "touched with a feeling of our infirmities," yet "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

The *means by which Christ teaches* are very varied. We might go through the preceding chapters of this work, and show that all the different topics on which we have been dwelling illustrate the modes in which the Saviour instructs. By human learning, by holiness, by more immediate divine teaching, and by the Scriptures; by practical and controversial works; by the history of his Church; by the ministry of the word, or the publications of his servants, he is carrying on one and the same design, the instruction of his people. The great Teacher is still one, the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor are different and apparently opposite modes inconsistent with his wisdom. John the Baptist comes in an abstemious manner and under a severe garb, "neither eating bread, nor drinking wine;" the Son of man comes "eating and drinking;" but both are divinely sent instructors, and "wisdom is justified of all her children;" they will believe and acknowledge and improve the divine wisdom in all the methods by which he teaches.

All providences are his voice; all situations and circumstances teach the lessons of his school; the whole earth is

the temple of his instruction. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

He has given his word to be "a light unto our feet, and a lamp to our paths," and there especially we have "the mind of Christ:" he sends his ministers "to open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light;" His people are not only enlightened by his beams themselves, but through this received light they communicate to others.* "among whom ye shine as lights, holding forth the word of life." Afflictions are by him made eminently instructive; his children can say to him, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

But it is especially by his Divine Spirit that our Lord efficiently teaches. The light which his word, his ministers, Christians, or afflictions, or the course of his providence, may give, will all be without effect, till the Holy Ghost, with divine energy, open the blind eyes, and enable us to discern the true light. This is even more important than his personal ministry, as may be seen by the extensive effects produced through the outpouring of his Holy Spirit.

In the plan of the divine dispensations, the Son of God is the Mediator through whom the Holy Ghost is sent to man. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." This shows us that it is only through a Meditator that the Holy God can so reign over sinful men, as to communicate his blessings to them, or they can go to him. We too much lose sight of the present meditation of Christ. It is dishonourable to him, it is injurious to his present grace and love, to think that salvation was, as it regards the sanctification of believers, finished when the Saviour died. Justification is not all our salvation. We need another blessing, illumination and inward purity. Holiness and obedience are essential to true happiness. And Jesus Christ has received of the Father that grace of the Holy Spirit, which he, as Mediator, now freely dispenses to sinful creatures, and by which they are enlightened and sanctified. And as sinners cannot have communications with and from a Holy God but through a Mediator, so the Holy Ghost is not communicated to man but through Christ (John vii, 37—39, xiv, 7.) It pleases God thus to convey the blessing, that we may see that we have no claim to it, and do not merit it; that our knowledge and holiness may be more expressly of grace, and that Jesus may have the just and due reward of his cross, and the benevolent joy of dispensing salvation to perishing sinners (John v, 21; vi, 51.) He rose to be Lord both of the dead and living (Rom. xiv, 9.) We are saved by his life (Rom. v, 10,) and he is, out of his fulness, dispensing, as Mediator, spiritual blessings to his people. Hence he says, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv, 19.) It is an unspeakable comfort that this "river of the water of life thus flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

The value of Christ's teaching may be more clearly discerned, by placing it *in contrast with other systems of instruction.*

Nominal Christianity is fearfully prevalent through Christian countries, Our Saviour describes it, when he says to Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This painful account of Sardis is too true a description of vast numbers among all Christian nations and Christian communities. From the best National Establishment, and the most select religious society, down to the lowest rank of Socinianism, what multi-

* Even the most experienced teacher may receive great help from a weak Christian. Luther observes, "I am a doctor in theology and many persons readily admit that they have received considerable help from me on sacred subjects; but I have found myself assisted and raised up by a word from a brother, who thought himself in no wise my equal. There is much value in a word from Scripture, spoken by a brother, in the time of trial. For the holy Scripture ever has the Holy Spirit present with it, and in different ways he excites and builds up the heart by the word. Thus Timothy, Titus Epaphroditus, and the brethren that came from Rome, comforted St. Paul, although he was far more taught and experienced in the word of God than they were. For there are times in which the greatest saints are weak, and others are stronger than they."

tudes have the name of Christian, and nothing of the life of Christ!

View the operation of this system, *where the sentiments are correct.* The system of a barren orthodoxy, by whatever class of Christians it may be held, from the highest Calvinist to the lowest Arminian, is a contrast to the teaching of Christ. It is the bare religion of sentiment, as opposed to the vital and influential religion of motive. It adopts a correct outside form, and resting in it, becomes one of the most effectual opposers of the real truth. Setting itself against the life and influence of the very truth which it holds, and reproaching its faithful confessors, who "live godly in Christ Jesus," it sits down self-satisfied with the mere profession of correct doctrine, in some particular favourite notions. Under this screne and mask, carnal nature, corrupt passions, and the love of the world and of sin flourish, not only with undiminished, but with increased vigor. St. Paul gives an awful prediction of this state of things: "In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

The doctrine of Christ, where taught by that great Teacher, gives spiritual life; it leads to the mortification of all sin, and to abounding in all the fruits of righteousness; it fills with joy and peace; with love and humility; with devotion and spirituality; and it brings a man to walk with God, and to have his conversation in heaven.

View again the operation of the system of nominal Christianity under another form, which, disregarding the teaching of Christ, makes *utility* the grand criterion of moral obligation. The benevolent labors, and the improvements and discoveries which we owe to many authors of this class, make it more necessary to point out its unscriptural character. It is the *system of human expediency;* one most extensively and injuriously prevalent at the present day. Its language, as expressed by its advocate Dr. Paley, is, "actions are to be estimated by their tendency to promote happiness. Whatever is expedient is right. It is the utility of any moral rule alone which constitutes the obligation of it." He founds this system on the Divine benevolence, which he states, "wills and wishes the happiness of his creatures." This is a partial view, and the conclusions are very unsafe and erroneous. Indeed Paley himself carries his own principles, legitimately enough for such false principles, to conclusions which show their error as a rule of conduct.

The fact, in contrariety to this pernicious system, is, that even the abstract truth, which is so clearly declared in the Holy Scriptures, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose," is a matter of faith; the evidences of which, through the darkness of our understanding, are only partially seen at present, and will only be clearly discerned and fully developed at the last day. But to infer that what seems to us useful on the whole is thence right to be done, assumes that we adequately and fully know what is useful, and thus assumes in fact that we know infinitely more than our finite faculties can possibly comprehend. The rule is insufficient in cases where there is no positive precept, for it would be gross fallacy to infer a line of duty from a partial view of a few consequences. Much more would it be not merely a fallacy but a dreadful presumption to admit such an inferential rule when opposing clear precepts of God's word.

Under the plausible exterior of praising the Divine benevolence, a deity is imagined suited to our carnal nature; God and his Christ are dethroned; man's will is invested with sovereign authority, and a mere refined selfishness and disguised infidelity are established. Unquestionably God has connected man's happiness with obedience; and godliness in the issue will be found to be the highest utility; but making utility the ground of moral obligation is making man's precarious judgment of utility, than which

nothing can be more fluctuating and uncertain, or more easily mislead and seduce, the guide of conduct.

God has higher ends in creating us than the mere happiness of man; he has formed all things for his own glory, as well as for the final good of those who love him; and many things to our view may be very useful that are very offensive to God, and ultimately very injurious to ourselves. What is the natural effect of this system? Overlooking Christ, to whom "all power in heaven and earth is given," and his government of the earth, it destroys the noble acting of faith, and leads men to human motives, quite inadequate to produce that self-denying, self-sacrificing, and disinterested conduct which has been most beneficial to the human race. Under this system the Apostles could never have said, "they counted not their lives dear," and Christianity would never have been propagated; Luther would never have effected the Reformation in Germany, or the Martyrs in England sealed our own with their blood; and thus persecutions, oppressions, slavery, the inquisition of the Romanists, and every iniquity may be plausibly covered, even to the most tremendous crime that ever was committed: "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people."

How different the teaching of Jesus! He shows us—God is to be loved more than life itself; his law is to be obeyed at all hazards; He sits on the throne, and man is formed for his glory; "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." God has implanted a conscience of right and wrong in every bosom, and he has given his word to display his will to man; and to those that ask he gives his Holy Spirit. Here is a fixed, an adequate, and sufficient guide and standard for human action, till the great day of judgment decide every thing. Whatever present difficulties the fulfilling of God's will may bring, a faithful conformity to it shall in the result invariably be found to be most for the benefit of a community, and for the good of the individual, most to promote human happiness, as well as to set forth the Divine glory.*

On the dead carcasses of a nominal Christianity, Infidelity, Mohammedanism and Popery feed and subsist. They have their chief nourishment in the worldliness, the selfishness, the vices, and the inconsistencies of Christians in name only. The bright light of Christian truth, exhibited in the faithful lives of Christians, would scare away these anti-christian delusions.

Infidelity began indeed at the fall, and was the first step in man's ruin, and it has ever since been the natural growth of the human mind, and the spring-head of human misery. It arose with new vigor, and with bad eminence flourished in the decay of vital Christianity, and it now gathers its main strength and power from the corruptions of Christians in name. Not seeing the blessedness of the gospel in the happy experience of real Christians, it finds no preponderating good to set against the restraints of religion, and says, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

This system altogether and avowedly sets aside the Saviour and his religion, with, "we will not have this man to reign over us."

If insubordination to rulers, speaking evil of dignities, and abused patronage; if Sabbath-breaking,—in its various branches of travelling, buying, selling, and working, and Sunday newspapers, parties, and pleasure-taking; if perjuries, profligacies, intoxication, increase of crime, and allowance of slavery in the West-Indies, and burning of widows in the East Indies; if all these are both the symptoms and the consequences of infidelity,—to what an extent does it prevail in our country. Let a man be under the teaching of Christ, and receive his promises, and he flies from these and other iniquities; cleansing himself "from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit,

* Dr. Dewar, in his Elements of Moral Philosophy, ably answers Paley, Vol. ii. pp. 37—63.

and perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

The system of *Mohammedanism* presents us with a false prophet to supersede the prophetical office of Christ; its characteristic features are pride and lust of dominion, oppression, tyranny, and licentiousness. Look only at the countries under its dominant power, and mark its baneful influences, which form a perfect contrast to the beneficial efficacy of the teaching of Christ. It is the awful retributory judgment of God on a corrupt Christianity.*

The system of *Roman Catholicism*, which is founded on an avowed admission of the offices of Christ, is in truth only a virtual setting aside of Him and his great salvation, by supplying human resources and remedies. What is the claim of infallibility, but a direct invasion of that blessed office which we are now considering! The leading feature of popery is an usurpation of the offices of Christ; while it is a professed acknowledgement, it is the most extended and effective denial, of the Father and the Son. His word is either withheld from the mass of the people, or supplanted by pretended apostolic traditions; his Spirit is set aside by man's invented purifications, and his law by human omissions and additions.

In the language of a friend, "What need is there of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, if the spirit of Roman Infallibility can reveal the sense of the *divine word?* What need of a *Divine Mediator* as *Priest*, if *Saints* can perform his office of intercession, and *Priests* can offer an unbloody sacrifice for the expiation of sin? What need of a *Divine Prophet*, when the *Church* can teach that wisdom which resides eminently and essentially in its *Head*? and what need of a *Divine King*, to sanctify the human soul by his power, if man, by penance and mortification, and alms, and prayers, can *sanctify* himself? On this system of heathenism under a Christian name, the whole glory of the gospel of grace is virtually overthrown: for thus fallen man can justify himself by his own goodness, sanctify himself by his own power, and glorify himself by his own perfection. Thus man assumes to be his own Saviour, by superceding the office of him, the eternal Son of God, expressly and mercifully provided for this purpose."

What then has been the fruit of this great corruption? No doubt there are exceptions, but speaking generally—"These *principles* of corrupt Christianity have been attended with a corresponding corruption in *practice*—a mere learned, or a superstitious and self-righteous, or an ignorant and overbearing priesthood,—an unnatural and self-imposed condition of social life, 'forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God had created to be received with thanksgiving,'" (1 Tim. iv. 3,)—the direct encouragement to sin in plenary indulgences—a second probation after death in purgatory—the purchase of masses for the dead—the invasion of domestic confidence by auricular confession, and similar instances of priestly influence over the conscience—above all, that tyranny over human opinion which is the necessary result of the supremacy of an Infallible Head, and which, enslaving the mind by ignorance of Bible truth, and terrifying the conscience by priestly domination, makes man the slave of man, and renders the body the victim of absolute power; a slavish condition of society being the natural and general result of full Roman Catholic ascendancy.*

* We can speak here only of the corruptions of Christianity to enter on Paganism would carry us too far. How striking is the description of idolatry in the 14th chapter of the Apocryphal book, the Wisdom of Solomon! after going through the vanity of idols, and showing that "the devising of idols was the beginning of spiritual fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life," the author of that book thus sums up the evil consequences; "so that there reigned in all men, without exception, blood, manslaughter, theft and dissimulation, corruption, unfaithfulness, tumults, perjury, disquieting of good men, forgetfulness of good turns, defiling of souls, changing of kind, disorder in marriages, adultery and shameless uncleanness. For the worshipping of idols, not to be named, is the beginning, the cause, and the end of all evil." The description is faithfully true.

* By their *Indexes*, the Romanists have most effectually set themselves against Christ, and his teaching. The Reader may see this fully exemplified in Mendham's account of Indexes,

Where there are exceptions, as in the cases of Pascal and Quesnel, those very exceptions are odious to that apostate church; and their retention of Roman peculiarities has been seriously injurious to their own full perception of the truth.

What a contrast is here to the blessed doctrine of Christ! No tyrannous domination; no pomp and pageantry of external show; no dressed and painted idols; no fumes and clouds of incense; no gorgeous processions; no dumb pantomime; no crossings and bowings, crucifixes and candles; none of these mark the doctrine of Christ: it is the simplicity of truth; the dominion of love; the pure offerings of spiritual worship. Though it be indeed foolishness to the wise of this world, it is characteristic of the greatness and glory of God. It is a revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; a proclamation of Divine mercy to rebels; a grand display of sovereign grace; a free salvation, entirely wrought out by God himself. It produces a change within, a moral revolution, and transforms a fallen sinner into a child of God, and a meet companion for heavenly spirits through eternity. Its genuine fruit here is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" its fruit hereafter is "everlasting life."

How infinitely superior is the teaching of Christ! How pure and excellent is his instruction when compared with every false system! His word is truly an infallible standard. There he speaks with divine authority, fixing and concluding, under the awful sanctions of our Creator, all the most important practical truths needful for man to know. "The people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The officers sent to apprehend him testified, "Never man spake as this man." By his Spirit he "convinces the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He opens the full extent of our disease, and unveils, not a fictitious, imaginary, and deceitful drama of human nature, but such a representation, that every one instructed by him can say, "This is a picture of my heart," "This is the real state of the world." He also provides, he manifests, and he applies, not a deceitful drug, vain and inefficient except to injure and destroy, but a complete remedy. There is not only the removal of guilt, but in the mode of removal the very spring of a future righteous conduct. He instructs the highest monarch on his throne, he overlooks not the poorest peasant in the cottage: the poor are indeed the special objects of his attention. He schools not man in his misery with the hard declamations of a severe master, but with the sweet and tender accents of love; He quiets and soothes, he guides and leads into all truth. The words of one of his under teachers well describe the instruction of the chief teacher: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." He not only recovers for us our forfeited inheritance, but shows us God our reconciled Father, and presents us before him as the recovered children of his love, again privileged to enter our Father's house, and dwell in his presence and favor through eternity.

Let us more explicitly point out *the character of his teaching*. His whole course of instruction is wonderful. He sometimes brings his children to the very gates of hell before they see the light of

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both Prohibitory and Expurgatory of the Church of Rome. Some points are there clearly established. The free circulation of the word of Christ is intentionally impeded, pp. 21, 33, 34, 184; its main doctrine—salvation by grace, through faith—is in every way opposed, p. 130, and those works which have most of the mind of Christ are especially prohibited: such as Dupin, Fenelon, Quesnel, and Pascal amongst the Romanists, and all the works of the Reformers. It is curious to see such works as those of Beveridge, Bingham, Burnet, Cave, Locke, Milton, Walton, &c. (see p. 122) condemned. Mr. Mendham observes, "It is not the extent of the truth to say, that a *good* library might be formed from the books condemned by the Papal Indexes; they would furnish an almost *perfect* one, perfect indeed for all the purposes of absolute and abundant utility."

saving truth;* their way is often dark and intricate, and sometimes very painful and distressing, before they arrive at joy and peace in believing. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known, I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."

Notice its enlightening and sanctifying character. His teaching *really enlightens*. It does not merely convey a notion to the intellect, but a vital influence; it is not "in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost:" his words "are spirit and life:" he can say, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is not like the light of the moon on a cold and chilling night, but like the light of the sun, warming and enlivening. Other teachers can bring right sentiments before us, but this Teacher has a superior power; he is not only "great in counsel," but also "mighty in work." Jer. xxxii, 19; Isa. xxviii, 29. He claims it as his prerogative to "put wisdom in the inward parts, and give understanding to the heart." Job xxxviii, 36. Though the Bible be plain, yet we want a right spirit before we can understand it. Jesus gives this. He was promised as "a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes." Isa. xlii, 6, 7. He did not literally give bodily sight to one Gentile, it is therefore a far better light that the promise intends, even the spiritual light which he communicates to the soul. Under his teaching we discern the infinite value of the soul, the evil of sin, the way of salvation by grace through faith, the wisdom of being truly religious; and thus "the eyes of our understanding are enlightened to know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." God himself also is made known to us by Christ; "No man hath seen God at any time;" "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In a higher and fuller sense than any human teacher can attain, our blessed Redeemer gives this best instruction: "the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding: he layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous." There is a special instruction which he gives to his true disciples beyond that which others receive or can give. Matt. xiii, 11—16; xvi, 17. May we constantly look to him for this saving illumination, and never rest only on the teaching of man.

We encroach on the office of Christ as the Teacher of his Church, when we give to any human being, or to authorities in the Church, or any councils that may be called, power to interpret the word infallibly. This great error of the Roman Church is not uncommon in a subordinate degree among Protestants. The Romanists endeavour to support it by what they consider a parallel case, the *judicial power* to interpret the laws. But Melancthon showed "the wide difference between the judicial power committed to a few individuals in a state, and the influences of the Holy Spirit enabling the true followers of Christ to under-

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*Bishop Reynolds, in his Third Sermon on Hosea xiv, has these striking remarks: "When a poor soul has been with Jonah in the midst of the seas, compassed with the floods, closed in with the depths, brought down to the bottom of the mountains, wrapt about head and heart and all over with the weeds, and locked up with the bars of sin and death; when it has felt the weight of a guilty conscience, and been terrified with the fearful expectation of an approaching curse, lying as it were at the pit's brink, within the smoke of hell, within the smell of that brimstone, and scorchings of that unquenchable fire which is kindled for the devil and his angels; and is then, by a more bottomless and unsearchable mercy brought unto dry land, snatched as a brand out of the fire, translated into a glorious condition, from a law to a gospel, from a curse to a crown, from damnation to an inheritance, from a slave to a son; then, then only, never till then, is that soul in a fit disposition to sing praises unto God. When God hath forgiven all a man's iniquities, and healed all the diseases of his soul, and redeemed his life from destruction.....and crowned him with loving kindness and tender mercies, turning away his anger, and revealing those mercies which are from everlasting in election unto everlasting in salvation, removing his sins from him as far as the east is from the west; then a man will call upon his soul over and over again, and summon every faculty within him, and invite every creature without him, to bless the Lord, and to ingeminate praises to his holy name."

stand the wisdom revealed in the Gospel, which is far beyond the reach of human wisdom."

His teaching *truly sanctifies*. Human teaching often fails of its highest ends, and the best instruction of man, in the best of truths, may be a stumbling block to some, and foolishness to others: but it is not so with the Saviour's teaching; when he instructs, he gives "the meekness of wisdom." He not only enlightens, but he teaches us to deny all sin and live wholly to God. He is himself the Refiner, who purifies his people and makes them "zealous of good works." Those are not under his instruction who think that hope in him is consistent with allowed sin. He makes the covetous liberal, the deceitful sincere, the dishonest upright, the drunkard sober, the licentious chaste, and the worldly-minded, spiritually-minded. Of this Shepherd all his sheep can say, "He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Humility is that part of sanctification, for which the most eminent of his servants are peculiarly distinguished. Paul thought himself "the least of the Apostles, and less than the least of all saints." It is a part of his plan of teaching to let his people first see the folly of their own wisdom, and the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as in the case of Augustine and Luther, and then to bring them with the simplicity of a child to receive his wisdom, and submit to his righteousness. It is very observable that our Divine Teacher does not restore us from our ruin so much by accurate knowledge as by penitence and faith, by love and obedience: by the state of the heart he then rectifies the understanding: he gives a right disposition, and so prepares for a right sentiment. Thus he sanctifies as well as enlightens. Well then may all his people join Nicodemus in asserting, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

We would, in conclusion, notice the *right reception of the lessons* of this best Teacher.

When Moses and Elijah appeared with our Lord in the mount of transfiguration the voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" the voice seemed to set aside Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, and Elijah, their leading prophet that the Son might remain the supreme and perpetual Teacher, and we might constantly attend to him. How then shall we best fulfill this heavenly mandate? Some practical directions may here assist the Christian student.

Be deeply *sensible of your need of his teaching*. It is a strong description of the state of men without Christ, "walking in darkness and dwelling in the land of the shadow of death," (Isaiah ix, 2,) but it is the real condition of all men who have not seen this great light. John xii, 46. A man may live in the darkness of heathen lands amidst all the blaze of light that shines in a Christian country if he neglect and despise the Light of Life. Our minds are dark, our hearts are hard, our prejudices are numerous, our affections are perverted. We cannot learn religion merely by books and human instruction; by natural talent and powers of intellect; or by the letter even of the inspired Scripture, or the best explanations of Scripture from God's most favored servants. Even past knowledge will not suffice for present and future exigencies; we are constantly dependant on Christ for fresh supplies of his illuminating and sanctifying grace. We press the necessity of this child-like spirit, of this sense of ignorance, and our own entire want of that instruction which he can give, remembering that solemn thanksgiving of our Redeemer, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Whenever we perceive our ignorance, let us then at once look up to him for wisdom: let all our self-wisdom on religion, whether opposed or added to the divine mind, be seen in its true light as the most egregious folly, and his Gospel have its full triumph in "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of

God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Believe that he does really teach all who commit themselves to him. As "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," so in coming to Christ for instruction, let us have the same precious faith. It is no fabled story; it is a solid, a cheering, a delightful truth. He is not indeed visibly present, but the Christian knows that he does truly and efficiently instruct, and fulfills his own promise, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come unto you." As the loadstone, while out of sight, and under a table, will attract the needle, which follows the magnet wherever it moves, so the Saviour, while invisible, is through all impediments really influential on the minds of his people. Let us have faith in him. Human lessons may be acquired by skill, acuteness, and a good memory, but the instruction of Christ is received through faith. It should greatly assist the Christian's faith to observe in his past experience what has been already done for him. He can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." He has already learned much. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." What he has already done is but the pledge of what he will do hereafter. If we now "know in part," it is an earnest that we shall hereafter "know as we are known." Gospel blessings come through faith, and the great difficulty here is so to live by faith, as to realize the presence and wisdom, the power, love, and daily teaching of this Divine Prophet.

Humbly, diligently, and obediently *use all appointed means for receiving his instruction.* After giving the promise of Divine teaching, the Psalmist says, "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding;" and then teaches us willingly and gratefully to receive and submit to divine instruction. So our Lord assures us, "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." May we then listen to this great Teacher in every mode in which he teaches his children. Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, hearing his word, is a beautiful picture of the posture in which the Christian wishes that his soul should constantly abide; always listening to the instructions of Christ. We cannot indeed now literally sit at his feet, but in every portion of Scripture which we read, in every faithful sermon which we hear, in every pious book which we peruse, in every visit to a poor believer in Jesus in his affliction, in every part of the Christian's life, we are, as it were, going to the Saviour and sitting at his feet. Man's teaching, where faithful, is not an obstacle to our being taught by Christ, but a means by which he teaches. All other Christian instructors are sent by him as under-shepherds; he is the chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. We are not indeed to receive from them any instruction but according to his mind. What says the Master? should be our constant sentiment with reference to Christ, as others used it with reference to human authorities. If a Heathen could say, "Plato is my friend, and Socrates is my friend, but truth is more my friend," well may a Christian say, "Christ is the truth, and Christ is dearer to me than all the world." We should indeed infinitely prefer his word before that of any earthly relation, or we are not worthy of him. He has also multiplied figures, parables, and lessons, by which we may, as it were, ascend step by step, every day and every hour, to constant communion with him. Where can we be without a constant memorial of him? He is the Sun of Righteousness that illuminates the world, the bread which nourishes to everlasting life, the door by which we enter the sheepfold, the habitation wherein we dwell, the way in which we journey to heaven, and the true vine, united to which we bear fruit. In short he is our light, our life, and glory. To the end of our days we must always remain learners at his feet, and while we act up to knowledge already given, he will continually give us fresh lessons of his love. Ephes. iii. 18, 19. Let us then day by day bring all our perplexities to him, and constantly seek his

guidance, and follow his will, so shall we assure our hearts that we are under his teaching.

Cherish a joyful expectation of perfect knowledge through Christ hereafter. On a large scale he "shall not fail, nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." Every individual believer may say, "thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." He is with his people in their life, and all "through the valley of the shadow of death," and when on the borders of the eternal world, he stands ready, as it were, to receive and welcome them home. Acts vii, 25. If indeed we be Christian Students, we are going to the land of light, we are on our way to those blessed regions where "there is no night," and no darkness. It is the glorious description of our residence above, "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it." Let us have a realizing anticipation of the day when we shall behold the great Teacher, and "know as we are known." A transforming and assimilating influence shall accompany the beatific vision; "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "The Lamb is the light" of the heavenly city; all the communications of light will therefore proceed from him. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." We may well suppose that he who has said, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," will remove the veil which now prevents our beholding the beautiful form and proportion of many a sacred truth, and the light and glory of many a dispensation at present hid in the "clouds and darkness that are round about him."

Christian Students, rise then to your high vocation. Here is a Teacher incomparably excelling every other Instructer; here is a school infinitely beyond the highest and most renowned school and college here below; the science is good not only for time, but for time and eternity; the honors are not fading, but durable; the rewards are not merely earthly and temporal but also heavenly and everlasting; like godliness, his teaching is "profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come." All may here attain the great prize, and the pursuit of it shall not be full of anxiety and toilsome labor, or the attainment of it leave an aching void in the soul. It is heaven upon earth to live with Christ here below, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and and we shall find hereafter "in his presence fulness of joy." Christian Students, "cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise; for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

In the meantime, then, and till that great Teacher come, and in his light we see light, we conclude with the Apostle's charge to Timothy—

GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING.

APPENDIX.

OUTLINES OF THE HISTORY OF DIVINITY.

It will be necessary to divide the subject under different heads, or classes of writers. We propose to consider therefore, in distinct sections, the Schoolmen, the Reformers, their Successors, the Nonconformists, the Divines at the Restoration and Revolution, and those of Modern Times.

The Fathers.

The title of Fathers is variously extended or limited, and is made to include by some, only writers to the fourth or fifth century, and by others writers to the twelfth or thirteenth. We would here take it in its largest acceptation.

We have but few remains of the first ages of the church; as it has been beautifully remarked "to believe, to suffer, to love,—not to write, was the primitive taste." Yet those remains which we have, are too valuable to be neglected. Milner, one well competent to judge, observes, "Ecclesiastical antiquity has been too much depreciated in our times, and students in divinity have been discouraged from the study of the Fathers. In truth, a selection of them ought to be made: to praise or dispraise the primitive writers in general, is obviously absurd."

It is a sad mistake to give the Fathers a kind of divine authority, of which their often fanciful interpretations of the Scriptures, and grossly contradictory explanations, renders them unworthy. The Hon. Robert Boyle justly observes of them, "Generally they were worthy men, and highly to be regarded as the grand witnesses of the doctrines and government of the Ancient Churches; most of them very pious, many of them very eloquent, and some of them (especially the two critics, Origen and Jerome) very learned; yet so few of the Greek Fathers were skilled in Hebrew, and so few of the Latin Fathers either in Hebrew or Greek, that many of their homilies, and even comments leave hard texts as obscure as they found them, and sometimes, misled by bad translations, they give them senses exceeding wide of the true. So that many times in their writings they appear to be far better divines than commentators, and in an excellent discourse upon a text you will find but a very poor exposition of it."

Witsius, in his True Theologian, speaking of some of the Fathers as widely shining lights of the primitive church, adds, "Whose knowledge consisted not in acute subtleties of curious questions, but in devout contemplation of God and his Christ: whose simple and chaste manner of teaching will not sooth prurient ears, but impressing on the mind the character of sacred things, will inflame the soul with the love of them: whose blameless innocence of manners, answering to their profession, and praised even by their enemies, fortified their doctrine with irrefragable evidence, and was an evident sign of their familiar intercourse with the most holy Deity.' In his Essay on the efficacy of the Baptism of Infants, he thus farther expresses his sentiments, in his usual spirit of Christian love and wisdom: 'I am not pleased to discuss their errors with severity, which I see is the manner of some writers now, who labour with so mad an itch and so varied an outcry of condemnation, that they defile their paper on every occasion, and even without occasion, with the faults of the Fathers. I think that that reverence is due to the Fathers of the Church, eminently merited by their diligence, zeal, and example, that we should pass by their blemishes in their other virtues. At the

same time, it is not to be dissembled, that they have often unhappily discussed things of the greatest moment and frequently admit expressions which, unless softened by the most kind interpretation, give a very hard sense."

The Fathers have been studied rather controversially than practically, and thence the study may have comparatively been unfruitful as to real edification. Milner has led us to a better plan of reading them. Their testimony to the Holy Scriptures has been elaborately displayed by Lardner; and that of the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the divinity of Christ, by Mr. Burton. Their evidence, from age to age, in favour of the main truths of the gospel is of great importance, and especially their testimony on the Socinian controversy; and their deeply serious views of spiritual and eternal things, cannot be read without profit. Yet, as critics on the sacred text, they are inferior to writers since the Reformation; and, as final judges of divine truth, or as having any traditional authority to decide scriptural obscurities, they must be utterly renounced. Even from the beginning "false philosophy" (Col. ii, 8,) began to corrupt the Church. An Usher might read the whole body of the Fathers with profit; but unless, as in his case, there be a special reason for doing so, there would be no adequate advantage, and many disadvantages in so extensive a study. Milner, in a private letter to Newton in 1771, says, "there were some very great Christians among them, though most of them mixed gospel truths with strange whimsies. The mixture of Platonism with the gospel was a great evil."

Little need be added respecting individual Fathers. The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, and the Epistles of Ignatius are beautiful specimens and remnants of Christian antiquity.

Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Augustine, shine as splendid lights in the early centuries. Their answers to the heathen of their day furnish us with ample materials for meeting the sophistries of infidels and heathen nations in our own times.

Men of the learning of Justin and Tertullian were doubtless used as important means of furthering the gospel by their character, as men of superior understanding, and therefore not easily deluded, as well as by their treatises. To see them humbling themselves before the gospel, despising their former notions, and strenuously counteracting their influence, not only by their profession, but by their defences of this new faith, must have had a prodigious influence. Though it seemed right that the Gospel should be introduced to the world by poor and illiterate men, (1 Cor. i, 26—29,) yet in its farther advancement, in resisting the subtilty as well as malice of its enemies, it should avail itself of the best human help, of wisdom and learning, under the influence of divine blessing, to assail its adversaries with their own misdirected weapons.

Jerome's and Origen's invaluable labours in the restoration, preservation, and handing down to us the pure text of the word of God must not be overlooked; to their revisions and translations of that word how much are we now indebted for that invaluable gift, the Holy Scriptures.

The Author has been delighted with the little which he has read of Augustine. The humility, devotion, and unction of this Father; the acute, lucid, and happy way in which he meets his objectors; and the heavenly wisdom (James iii, 17,) running through his remarks, will always, notwithstanding the excess of allegorical interpretation and the defect of a clear statement of justification, make his writings valuable.

There are, in the voluminous works of the Fathers, many treatises that may be separately read with considerable advantage. Such as Justin Martyr's and Tertullian's Apologies, Cyprian's Letters, Augustine's Confessions, his City of God and Treatises against the Pelagains, Origen's work against Celsus, Gregory's Pastor, Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, and many delightfully devotional treatises in Bernard.

Justin Martyr's clear view of Justification may be seen in the following extract of his Epistle to Diognetus—"He

gave his Son a ransom for us; the holy for the transgressors, the good for the evil, the just for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corrupt, the immortal for mortals. For what else covers our sins but his righteousness? In whom else could we the unjust and the impious be accounted righteous, but in the Son of God only? O the sweet exchange! O the unsearchable contrivance! O the unexpected benefits, that the iniquity of many should be hid in a righteous one, and that the righteousness of one should justify many who were unjust.*

Chrysostom held the same doctrine distinctly, showing in the case of Abraham, (in his 2nd Hom. on the Epistle to the Romans,) that works of faith do not justify before God. "The Apostle means to show that even Abraham was justified by faith; in which indeed there is the excellence of a mighty victory; for it is not indeed unlikely that one who has no good works should be justified by faith, but that a man adorned with beauteous deeds, should be just not thence, but from faith, is truly wonderful."

As we depart from the apostolic age, the church in general departed from evangelical simplicity. Dr. Prideaux in his address to the reader before his Life of Mahomet, says, "The churches in the East having drawn the abstrusest niceties into controversy, did thereby so destroy peace, love, and charity from among them.....that they lost the whole substance of their religion, and.....in a manner drove Christianity quite out of the world by those very controversies in which they disputed with each other about it. So that.....the Saracens taking advantage of the weakness of power, and distractions of councils which those divisions had caused, soon overran with terrible devastation, all the Eastern Provinces of the Roman empire;.....turned every where their churches into mosques, and.....forced on them the abominable imposture of Mahommetanism." pp. vii, viii.

Nothing can be more painful than the interminable and fierce conflict on the veriest trifles which divided large portions of the professing Christian church. A heathen author, probably exaggerating the actual state of things, says, "the hatred of the Christians to each other, exceeded the fury of the wild beasts against men." God had his own servants in the midst of those days, but it was only his special mercy and faithfulness to his promises (Matt. xvi. 18.) that preserved a church amidst such unchristian controversies. As might be expected, amidst such a general decay of piety, not many works worth studying have come down to us from the sixth to the fifteenth century. Bede, Bertram, Theophylact, and Bernard, are among the most useful writers in that period.

The titles of the centuries before the Reformation, given by Cave, are very significative of the state of divinity in each age:

1. Apostolic.
2. Gnostic.
3. Novatian.
4. Arian.
5. Nestorian.
6. Eutychian.
7. Monothelite.
8. Eiconoclastic.
9. Photian.
10. Obscure.
11. Hildebrandine.
12. Waldensian.
13. Scholastic.
14. Wickliffite.
15. Synodal.
16. Reformed.

The Schoolmen, and their contemporaries.

Of the schoolmen Luther says, "They did nothing but propose paradoxes; their whole art was founded in a contempt for Scripture; and here I know the truth of what I say, for I was brought up among them."

Leighton observes in his address to students, "That you may not be imposed upon by the common reputation of acuteness and learning, I confidently affirm, that to understand and be master of those trifling disputes that prevail in the schools, is an evidence of a very mean understanding; while, on the contrary, it is an argument of a genius truly great, entirely to slight and despise them, and to walk in the light of pure and peaceable truth, which is far above the dark and cloudy region of controversial disputes."

Usher says of the schoolmen, "They were good to puzzle men's heads with

* See Justin Martyr's Works, Ed. Paris, fo. 1742. Some doubts have been raised whether the Epistle be his. Dupin considers it to be so, without certainly affirming it.

unnecessary doubts, but bunglers in resolving them, and that their writings had done more mischief to the church, than brought advantage either to learning or religion; that they might serve for controversial disputes in the schools, but were very improper for the pulpit, and altogether useless for the functions of civil life." Bishop Wilkins gives similar views in his Gift of Preaching.

Bonaventura and Aquinas, styled by their admirers, the seraphic and angelical doctors, were the most famous writers of the schoolmen. Luther says, Bonaventura is the best among all the school divines and church writers. Estius's Sum is said to contain the best account of the scholastic divinity. Colet's opinion of Aquinas is worth recording. Speaking to Erasmus, who had been praising that school divine, he said, "Why are you so fond of commending that schoolman, who, without a great deal of arrogance, could never have reduced all things into such positive and dogmatical definitions; and without too much of a worldly spirit, he could never have so much corrupted and defiled the pure doctrines of the gospel with his mixture of profane philsophy."

Dark indeed, was the state of divinity, when at the commencement of the Reformation, the faculty of theology at Paris declared that "Religion was undone, if the study of Greek and Hebrew was permitted;" and one of the Monks uttered these words, "They have invented a new language which they call Greek, you must be carefully on your guard against it, it is the mother of all heresy. I observe in the hands of many persons a book written in that language, and which they call the New Testament. It is a book full of daggers and poison. As to the Hebrew, dear brethren, it is certain, that all who learn it become instantaneously Jews." Yet, through Divine mercy, even those dark ages were not left wholly without scriptural writers. Bradwardine, Wickliffe, Huss, and Jerome diffused some rays of evangelical light through the darkness.

Bradwardine and Wickliffe were British divines. Bradwardine speaks with much grief of the general departure from the doctrine of free grace, and compares it to that of the four hundred and fifty false prophets united against one. He says, "How many indeed in our times despise thy saving grace, and contend that free-will is sufficient for salvation, or if they use the term grace, either use it perfunctorily as a pretence, or boast that they deserve it by the strength of their free-will." He speaks afterwards of almost the whole world as having thus gone into the error of Pelagius.

Wickliffe's life and sentiments have been recently fully investigated by the researches of Mr. Vaughan, who has placed his character in a yet higher light than he had been generally held. He distinctly held justification by faith only. He speaks thus, "The merit of Christ is sufficient of itself to redeem every man from hell. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation. We are not to seek to be justified in any other way than by his justice. We become righteous through the participation of his righteousness." Wickliffe's Translation of the Bible, with prefaces and arguments to each book; and the hundred and above volumes that he wrote against Antichrist and the Church of Rome were, doubtless important preparatory steps to the Reformation. In his book, entitled "The Pathway to perfect Knowledge," he tells us what pains he had taken in translating the Bible into English—how he had got many old Latin Bibles, "for the late books," said he, "are very corrupt." He employed many learned men to assist him in the fourth translation. He taught that the truths of the gospel suffice to salvation, without observing the legal ceremonies. He urged all classes to study the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, which, he says, "is full of authority, and gives instructions to the simple, especially on all points needful to salvation."

The writings of Wesselus Groningen, who died in 1489, were published in one volume, 4to. in 1614. They appear, from Luther and Milner's account to be eminently evangelical. In our own country also, Dean Colet went many preparatory steps towards reformation, in Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth's

reign, not only by promoting literature, but also by throwing a just slight on the School Divines, and bringing the Scriptures freely before the people in his ministry, as the only fountain of Christian wisdom. He could not go far in error, one of whose precepts was, "Call often for the grace of the Holy Ghost." In the statutes of St. Paul's School he directs, that Christian authors, such as Lactantius, Prudentius, Jerome, Ambrose, and Austin should be read along with the best classics.

Indeed on the revival of literature, before the reformation, Augustine's "City of God" was expounded in the University of Oxford to a large auditory.* Several of the works published in the reign of Henry the Eighth, before the Reformation was fairly established, mark the struggles between light and darkness. The Primer of Henry the Eighth, in English, contains many admirable prayers: and the alterations in its numerous editions attest the gradual growth of a purer doctrine. The Articles of Religion in 1536, and the Institutions of a Christian Man in 1537, though mixed with much Popish doctrine, mark the same growth; though the influence of Gardiner, in the preparation of the Necessary Erudition, published in 1543, rendered that less pure than the former works; and on Edward's accession it was no longer circulated by authority: yet all these works show that light was winning its way through the darkness, and the dawn of a better time was already apparent.

The Reformers.

The sixteenth century introduces us to the wonderful display of Divine grace in the *glorious Reformation*. It was a real Reformation—a return to God on the purifying principles of his own word. It was one of the mercies of that era, that it was the revival of literature, particularly in the knowledge of the original language of Scripture. The discovery of printing amazingly facilitated the diffusion of Divine truth, and in consequence, the revival of religion. Men of learning were very generally men of God, and gave in the reformed churches the tone of religion to the course of study in universities and seminaries. Learning was more exclusively religious then than at any future time; and many writers on general subjects, who incidentally mention religion, were manifestly right in doctrine. Would that this could be said now!

It is an era that calls for close attention and diligent study. The original writers and the historians of that age will amply repay all our researches. They will both edify the heart, and fortify us against almost every modern as well as ancient error. The poet Cowper, writes to a relation, respecting his studies, "Let your divinity, if I may advise you, be the divinity of the glorious Reformation. I mean in contradistinction to Arminianism, and all the *isms* that were ever broached in this world of error and ignorance. The Divinity of the Reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously; it has been that of the Church of Christ in all ages; it is the divinity of St Paul, and of St. Paul's Master, who met him in his way to Damascus." In this view the author fully concurs; and he feels it the more important to press the subject, as the Reformers have been either disparaged or neglected by modern writers.

To show that the Reformers have been neglected, we need only look at the list of books recommended in the lists of Dr. Wotten, Bishops Cleaver, Watson, and Tomline, Dr. Williams, and Dr. Doddridge. Bishop Cleaver and Tomline almost wholly leave them out. Dr. Williams, in his Christian Preacher, has very little noticed them. Even Doddridge, who enters at some length into different schools of divinity, entirely forgets this school. To say nothing of foreign Reformers, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Zuinglius, Martyr, and Bucer, he mentions not our own Jewell, Latimer, Cranmer, Nowell, Foxe, Willett, Hooker, Perkins,

* Would not that fine monument of human genius and piety be still a happy corrective to the injurious tendency of Heathen Classics? Is not our system of education now far too exclusively classical? and may not some of the national sins of our country, our pride and love of earthly glory and national aggrandizement be attributable to this cause?

&c. Though he gives generally just and discriminating characters of subsequent writers, the more scriptural school of the Reformation is wholly omitted. The departure from their principles produced a neglect of their writings in previous days, and this made them scarce and dear; and hence, probably, some of these writers omitted them, but this very omission tended to increase the disregard to them. The Church of Christ, and the Church of England, as a pure part of that Church, have materially suffered from this neglect.

The more the Author has read of the writings of the Reformers, whether of our own or other countries, the more he is fully disposed, making allowances for an ancient dress, and some errors of the times, to agree with those who think that they were eminently scriptural in their sentiments and statements. They are less systematic, and more experimental; less theoretic, and more practical on Christian principles; they are more consistent in doctrine, and more useful in application, than many of their successors. Their standard of divinity is of a high, and sound, and generally uniform character. Those who are supposed by some to have improved theology, have, in the Author's opinion, really lowered the tone of divine truth.

The work of the Reformers was not, as it has been noticed, like the work of the Apostles, introducing a fresh and original body of religious truth; but the removing of all those massive obstructions, under which the truth that had been given was buried and lost, and placing the recovered light on a candlestick, that it might "give light to all in the house." Their great principles were the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures over the mind and conscience; and the responsibility of every human being to God, and to God only, as the ultimate judge, for his faith and conduct; and thence the paramount duty of each one exercising his own judgment on the Divine records, and drawing his own sentiments from them.

God showed on an illustrious scale the *power of simple faith in his word*, to break through all kinds of impediments and obstructions, which for a thousand years the great enemy had been casting round that word. The Reformers lived by faith on that word, and, sustained by hopes realized through faith, (Heb. xi.) they endured the conflict, and attained the crown.

It was a merciful providence that the very elements of our national constitution in England were imbued at the Reformation with the principles of the Gospel. Our coronation service is throughout evangelical. Our king is acknowledged to reign by the grace of God. Our Houses of Parliament, our Colleges, our elder Grammar Schools, and our Assizes commence their proceedings with prayer. Our indentures, our writs, our bills of lading, all in form acknowledge God. Our coats of arms have generally Christian mottos. Our ancient wills have all a pious commencement. The whole land is divided into parishes, and every parish has its appointed teacher. Christianity is a part of our laws, and has a national establishment and public maintenance. We have thus the complete framework of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." Alas! that it should now have become so generally only the framework! like the magnificent ruins of the temple, of which it might be once said, "The Lord is there," but on which we must now write "Ichabod, the glory is departed;" till the full time come, when the old wastes shall be built, and the former desolations shall be raised up, "and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of former generations."

The doctrine, the revival of which chiefly characterized the Reformation, was that of *justification by grace through faith*. This runs through all the writings of the Reformers, like a rich vein of gold, and their works are, in this doctrine particularly, a mine of invaluable wealth to the Church. "A Christian may glory," says Luther "that in Christ he has all things: that all the righteousness and merits of Christ are his own by virtue of that spiritual union which he has with him by faith. On the other hand, that all his sins are no longer his, but that Christ through the same union,

bears the burden of them. And this is the confidence of Christians, this is the refreshment of their consciences, that by faith our sins cease to be ours judicially, because they are laid on him, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Luther considered this the great doctrine of Christianity, and the test of orthodoxy or heresy, as it was held soundly or corruptly; that all other points were subordinate to or centered in this; and that every objection to it which could possibly be devised, was done away by this single consideration, namely, that a right faith was necessarily productive of good works.

Tindal was one of the earliest Reformers, and has been called the apostle of England. He will amply repay perusal. He is clear in his doctrinal statements, taking the same views as Calvin, though he wrote before him; he is comforting, practical, and devotional.

Latimer, by his naivete and simplicity, his wit, honesty, and piety, has, more than the other Reformers, retained his popularity. He will furnish many hints for useful addresses to the people.

Cranmer's writings manifest sound learning, deep piety, and holy wisdom. His Catechism and his book on the sacrament, and the Homilies prepared by him, are full of the very spirit of the Reformation.

Bishop Ridley and Philpot were esteemed among the most learned of our Reformers. They had sound and clear views of that gospel which they sealed with their blood.

Bradford's Letters are among the most edifying and instructive remains of this period; the sweet spirit of adoption breathes throughout.

Jewell is eminent for his extensive learning, his sound views, and his Christian eloquence. All his works are valuable.

Fox is a voluminous writer, having written several works besides his Acts and Monuments; he is serious, honest, and open in his avowal of the doctrine of Christ.

Knox was more especially called to action than to writing, and his life is a vivid book, illustrating by its own brightness the energy of Divine grace; his History of the Reformation, which is his principal work, was not finished by himself.

The Character of the writings of *Foreign Divines* was diversified.

Luther is powerful, lively, and decisive; a keen, distinct, and strong evangelical statement distinguishes his writings. He is ever insisting on the main doctrine of justification by faith, and boldly maintaining the whole range of truth.

Melancthon is polished and cautious, decisive in the same main doctrines, but hesitating on many points, and backward to state his views on Calvinistic topics, having much natural aversion to controversy.

Calvin has an uncommon fine genius, and is full of beautiful and original illustrations of God's Word; he is more consistent and accurate, and systematic than the other Reformers. His danger is pushing his statements beyond the Scriptures.

Zuinglius, is acute, penetrating, and adventurous; he holds justification by faith, but has some peculiar opinions.

The respective characters of the principal Reformers admirably qualified them for their work; the honest courage of Luther, the mild and holy spirit of Melancthon, the acuteness of Zuinglius, the clear mind and fine genius of Calvin, the holy wisdom of Cranmer, the determined boldness of Knox, all under the influence of divine grace, made them the worthy and suitable champions of the Reformation; and, with all their faults, to this day their writings remain invaluable documents of sound theology.

It is delightful in Calvin's last will, made only a month before his death, to see him (while expressing his continuance in the same faith which he preached, but without introducing any of those views which distinguished his system) offering up his desire to God, in terms that every Christian would concur in, "beseeching him so to wash and cleanse me in the blood of the great Redeemer, which was shed for all poor sinners, that in his image I may appear before his face."

Erasmus was far from rising to the

evangelical spirit of the Reformers; and his course furnishes a most instructive lesson of the evil and danger of wanting a simple and upright, a decided and devoted confession of Christ, and readiness to suffer for his sake. The highest wisdom is to be simple, open and bold in our confession of Christ. Christian Reader! may this grace ever be given to us from above!

The Reformers urged strongly the importance of the literal interpretation of Scripture. Luther says, "The literal sense of Scripture alone is the whole foundation of faith and Christian theology,—"Allegories prove nothing, and are empty speculations;" in this, Melancthon, Calvin, Peter Martyr, and the great body of the Reformers concurred: Calvin indeed more entirely pressed the literal interpretation, and his whole Commentary is on this plan.

We need not here attempt to draw the lines farther as to the theological sentiments of the Foreign divines. As Melancthon grew in experience he became more cautious in his sentiments, as the different editions of his common-place book prove. Yet his correspondence with Calvin, shows that he by no means held Calvin's view in that obnoxious light which many do.

Nor can we, in this rapid sketch, enter with minuteness into the views of distinct churches. Authors in the Lutheran churches generally followed Melancthon; and in the Reformed, Calvin; and in the Belgic churches before Arminius, an ultra Calvinism prevailed among many.*

Successors of the Reformers.

The Reformation was maintained by *successors* of a similar spirit. The chief writers for a great part of a century after that blessed event, preserve a uniformity of doctrinal statement which we do not subsequently find. The Holy Scriptures reigned with just and beneficent sway over human authors, and were the ultimate referees on all questionable topics. Many able and pious men succeeded the Reformers, and that in places of authority and influence, and thus carried on and maintained the work which had been so happily commenced.

The writings of this age are full of gospel truths, clearly displayed and applied. They are very instructive and edifying, and with few exceptions, a remarkable uniformity of doctrine prevailed.* With great powers of mind and extensive learning, they enforced the peculiarities of the Christian faith.

Yet the character of some of these writings is marked by a refinement of statement, and a multiplication of distinctions and divisions, and a subtlety of argument, instead of the more simple, experimental, and practical character of their predecessors. They seem to have been driven to this by the subtleties of Papists and others who opposed them.

The leading divines in Queen Elizabeth's reign must be considered as making rather a more distinct and explicit statement of Calvinistic doctrine than their predecessors. Calvin's Institutes were read in the schools by order of con-

* The sources of information respecting the Reformers are 1. Their publicly acknowledged catechisms, confessions, creeds, defences, and replies. 2. Their more private writings. 3. Original Historians, such as Seckendorff, Scultetus, Sleidan, and Thuanus, for the continent; and Fox, Fuller, Burnet and Strype, for our own country. Modern historians, as Hume, Robertson, and many others can by no means be relied on for a just view of the principles of the reformers. Of more ancient historians also it may be observed, that some, like Fox, write in the true spirit of the Reformation. Take for instance his account of the origin of printing, he attributes it to the ordination of God, and enters into a religious view of its value. Robertson (a Christian divine), giving an account of the same thing, calls it in a serious historical work, "a fortunate discovery." Fuller is pious, quaint, and witty. Others, like Strype, Burnet, and Brandt, attain not in their own views the spirit of the Reformers, but are very valuable in their collections of original information and authentic documents. It is gratifying to see that the works of the Reformers are much more in demand than they were, and that they are now, both on the continent and in our own country, reprinting on a fuller scale than hitherto. May God grant that their writings may thus accomplish a second revival of religion, similar in its effects, and more extended in its operation, and with all the advantage of the experience which we have since had of the danger of departing from their scriptural principles!

* Till Arminius arose, there were no contests of any moment but with the Papists, or those who dislike the church ceremonies.

vocation. Indeed, an ultra Calvinism, which appears to have been maintained by some, rather than the scriptural divinity of our first Reformers, led, as might be expected, to opposing statements in doctrine. With this a pertinacity on one side of adherence to, and on the other of rejection of, non-essential ceremonies, grew and extended. Thus the attention of Christ's Church was turned from vital truths; and a disputatious and unchristian spirit was excited.

On the Continent, doctrinal discussions arose. They originated mainly with Arminius, who was a pupil of Beza's and at one time approved of his and Calvin's views. About the year 1600, he was requested to write a confutation of some ministers at Delft who opposed Calvinistic views, and undertaking to do it, he embraced the opinions which he intended to confute.

The leading position of Arminius is, that God elects to salvation from foreseen faith and holiness: but it is with many modifications, and conceding that man could not by his natural ability believe. The leading position of Calvinists is, that men are elect, not for, but unto faith and holiness. The innumerable modifications and ramifications of these positions have occasioned all that strife which has arisen on this subject. It will be obvious that the excess of one system is Antinomianism, and of the other, Pelagianism; but it would not be difficult to show that either position might be so guarded and qualified in itself or by other parallel doctrines, as on the one hand fully to provide for salvation by grace, and on the other to secure man's responsibility, the obligations of the moral law, and every interest of holiness; the points on which the true believer on either side will cordially meet.

The most serious evil of Arminius's views is their tendency to deface and injure the freeness, and fulness, and riches of divine grace, and to exalt the powers of man; a tendency which was seen in the retrograde course of many who have adopted his sentiments.

There are serious evils also in pushing Calvinistic views to an extreme. Speaking favourably of Dr. Ames's work against Grevinchovius, Usher still observes, "If in seeking to make that straight which was crooked in the Arminian's opinion he hath bended it too far the contrary way, and inclined too much upon the other extremity, it is a thing which in the heat of disputation hath befallen many worthy men before him."

An adequate sense of our fallen, and ruined, guilty, and depraved state, lies at the very root of all this controversy. Let this be deeply felt, let the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and our just desert of everlasting punishment through sin, be adequately perceived, and there will be little difficulty in other things. The only wonder will be that condemnation is not final and universal; and that, for any human being, there should be riches of grace to pardon, save, and for ever bless. The ruin of any will be easily resolvable into an equity, infinitely wise and holy in the Sovereign Ruler of all worlds; and the salvation of any into the unsearchable riches of divine grace.

In the Author's own view, as the reader will have seen, the position that we are elect unto holiness, is more scriptural (Ephes. i. 4; 2 Thess. ii, 13, 14: 1 Pet. i. 1, 2.) and more agreeable to the views of the Reformers and of the Church of England, and less liable to abuse, and more accordant with those dispositions which it is the great design of the Gospel to produce; but he is satisfied that the difference may be made merely verbal, and, if salvation by grace be held, should never separate Christians.

Arminius retained the all-essential Christian doctrine, justification by faith; and, in some other respects, held the doctrines of grace so clearly, that he would, by some modern writers, have been charged with Calvinism. The study of his works might be very useful to those who have, under that name, opposed evangelical religion.

His change of sentiment, however, led to great discussions. Men too readily thought the whole essentials of religion were at issue, and earnestly contended for their own particular views.

Disputes increased till it was thought desirable by the authorities in Belgium, to convene a Synod at Dort. This was

held in 1618 and 1619; and the decrees of the Synod contain a very able, clear and distinct statement of Calvinistic views. They are well worth attentive study. Nothing can be more unfair than Tilenus's abridgment of them, adopted by Heylin, Bishops Womock and Tomline. The acts at large, with the sentiments of the divines from different places appended to them, will amply repay the perusal. Mr. Scott translated but a small part of the whole volume, and has too much considered the history of the preceding events given by him as impartial.

The course of treatment adopted against the Remonstrants, with the great talents and abilities of some of them, such as Grotius, Episcopius, Curcellæus, and Limborch; and, must we not add, the agreeablness of their doctrines, to the natural intellect, if not to the unconverted heart, all tended to spread their views very widely, and prepared for that falling away from the doctrines of the Roformation which was more distinctly marked in the following age.

If we may judge from the accounts before us, the learned *Grotius*, and those who acted with him, were severely treated. Severity as usual failed of its end. But we cannot here enter into the history of the times, or consider whether provocations on one side, may not have occasioned severities on the other. The deathbed of Grotius was Christian. His defence of the truth of the Christian religion and of the atonement are still valuable works. But his expositions explain away the doctrines of the Bible, and he made sacrifices and admissions to opposite parties, Papists and Socinians, which truth does not justify, and which, under the sanction of his name, gained access, and helped to bring on a lamentable and an extensive departure from the truth.

The Deputation to the Synod of Dort and the conduct of the English Divines there, show that the doctrines of Arminius were then considered as novelties. The publications of the Foreign Divines, Arminius and Episcopius, Grotius, and Limborch soon seem to have produced a great change, not only in their own but also in other countries, and a change truly injurious as far as it tended to weaken scriptural statements of the doctrines of grace.

Some observations will now be added on individual writers. The invaluable *Hooker* died in 1600; his life by *Walton*, written with that simplicity which marks Walton's Biographical pieces, gives us an interesting view of his meek and humble, meditatating and retired character; while his works manifest great vigor of thought, eloquence of expression, soundness of judgment, and decidedly evangelical sentiment, his Ecclesiastical Polity is one of the bulwarks of the Established Church of England. Richard *Sibbes* is an excellent author of these days. His "Bruised Reed" and "Soul's Conflict" were published by himself; but many of his works were published from notes taken while he was preaching. He died about 1635. It is to be regretted that his works have never been wholly collected and published, with such corrections or notes as might be requisite. They are full of evangelical and consolatory statement, and yet very holy and practical, and are deservedly favourite works with pious and devout minds.

There is another character that is specially worthy of our attention, both for the value of his writings, and the wise and holy part which he took; we mean Archbishop *Usher*, who died in 1656. He was one of the most wonderful men of that wonderful age, and is not unjustly styled by Dr. Johnson, 'the great luminary of the Irish Church.' The praise which he received from the most learned men of the age was of the highest character, and the University of Oxford in 1644, styled him "the most skilful of primitive antiquity, the unanswerable defender of the orthodox religion." He had read *All* the Fathers. His loyalty in the most trying scenes was proved to the uttermost: while he freely discharged his conscience in reproving the sins of the royal party, and testifying against injurious measures pursued; yet he adhered to the king amid all his trials.

Dr. *Hammond* had extended learning and real piety, and is valuable for criticism and antiquity, but his views are far from the simplicity of the principles of the Reformation. He is not sound on

justification by faith; righteousness by faith in Christ has ever been "a stumbling stone and a rock of offence." Rom. ix, 30—33. Yet one golden sentence of his deserves recording—"O what a glorious thing, how rich a prize for the expense of a man's whole life, were it, to be the instrument of rescuing one soul from ruin!"

Bishop *Sanderson* is more correct in doctrine. His works, though not abounding with the grace of the Gospel, do not, as far as we have read them, present views opposing that grace. He was a man of great reflection and judgment, had much reputation as a casuist, and his works have many important discussions and decisions. He has been charged with contradictions and subterfuges in his casuistry, and though much allowance should be made for the peculiar times in which he lived, and the difficult cases brought before him, perhaps he cannot wholly be cleared of partiality, in favor indeed of a righteous cause: though that can never justify a partial course. Rom. iii, 8.

The writings of the pious, learned, and modest *Mede*, who died in 1638, remain still invaluable monuments of sanctified learning, and a treasury of instruction on the most difficult subject of prophecy, though to some parts of his views on that deep and mysterious part of Scripture there have been serious objections. He first laid open the method of the Book of Revelation, and led the way to that system of interpretation which in the main has been since adopted by the generality of Protestant Commentators. He purposely abstained from any public statement that might appear to favor either the remonstrant, or contra-remonstrant views.

Bishop *Taylor* is a writer of the first rate powers, with a fine imagination, and much devotion, holiness, and humility. Yet he is too ascetic, and has too little of the good tidings of the Gospel. Bishop Heber notices his defence of Episcopacy and the Liturgy as very powerful; his practical and devotional writings call forth his chief powers, and will ever make him acceptable to the pious mind. He fell into something of Pelagian errors, and, like Warburton, did not consider the immortality of the soul revealed to the Patriarchs. It is also to be regretted that prayers for the dead have received countenance from some passages in his writings.

Many excellent divines on the continent, such, as Zanchius, Junius, Pareus, Piscator, Spanhem, Amesius, &c.; and others in our own country, Greenham, Bishops Babington, Cowper, Andrews, &c.; Hieron, Downame, Whateley, &c. lived in this period. We pretend not to know all their writings, nor to defend all we do know; but have seen enough to be satisfied that much instruction is to be derived from them.

The Non-conformists.

We would take this term in a large sense, as comprehending all in our own country who, from the Reformation, disliked and separated from the Liturgy and ceremonies of the Established Church, till we come to modern times. It will be obvious that this class includes authors of very different sentiments and character, but our object is only to give brief hints and sketches.

Among the Non-conformists there is a class of divines, whose writings remain imperishable monuments of sanctified talent, learning, and piety, and who have been followed by others down to our own days. No one can well read the practical writings of such Scotch Presbyterians as Guthrie and Dickson; or the English Puritans, Cartwright and Burroughs; or the Independents, Owen and Goodwin; or the Non-conformists, Baxter, Manton, Bates, Howe, Flavel, Charnock, and the once despised Bunyan; or more recent writers, as Henry, Grove, Earl, Grovsenor, and Bennet, without edification, and in their works are some of the finest specimens of the workings of pious and powerful minds on the subject of religion in our language. In general, in their writings, there is little interference with worldly politics, and but little, comparatively, with Church government. Those living in the rebellion were too much carried away by it; but in many there was much separation from the world, great integrity, indefatigable indus-

try, and a high toned spirit of piety and devotion. Some were men of great learning. They clearly state the doctrines of the gospel and guard them them (some perhaps too much) on every side; they minutely discriminate between the sincere and the hypocrite; they were acquainted thoroughly with the workings of the human heart, and with the Holy Scriptures; their expositions of which are full of valuable matter. When thrown out of the Church and kept by an unhappy policy in silence, they turned their leisnre to the best advantage in multiplying publications chiefly on practical devotion.

The character of the age was more scholastic than that of the Reformation, and in this view not so scriptural. The principles of the Reformers were tried out and proved at the very stake: there was not equal distinctness, but there was more simplicity and unction.

A multiplication of distinctions and divisions in their discourses was a fault of the successors of the Reformers, and most of the earlier authors of whom we now speak fell into this fault, and multiplied divisions almost without end. Still their writings not only retarded the decline of religion, but maintained a spirit of deep piety, which they spread in America as well as in this country.

The Non-conformists, after the restoration, were much more generally loyal than the Puritans of the Commonwealth. Time had dissipated false theories, and shown Christians the danger of interfering with this world's politics.

Some of the leading characters demand particular notice. That of Dr. Owen stands eminent in various respects. His devotional, and practical, and expository works are an invaluable treasure of divinity. It does not appear to me that he took a wise or a Christian course, with regard to government; ministers should never direct the politics of this world. "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth:" the minister's objects are higher. His character, and his decision to support the Protectorate must have had influence in maintaining that usurpation. The defence set up for him falls short of a justification of his conduct, and it is better at once to acknowledge what is deemed the error of an eminent servant of God, than justify him throughout. His sermon after the king's death would tend to strengthen Cromwell's hand, and he evidently had a close intimacy with that usurper. With this serious drawback on his character, we freely avow, that his writings are eminently spiritual, devotional, and edifying. He is full of Biblical learning, sound exposition of doctrine, acuteness, and information. His controversial writings against the Socinians and Papists, on the question of justification, on the Jewish Questions, Sabbath, &c. are valuable and important. There is hardly any modern controversy that he has not well-digested and furnished matter for the defence of the truth. He gives expanded and rich views of the fullness of the Gospel. His book on the 130th Psalm, is one of the fullest displays of evangelical forgiveness that we have ever seen. The Christian familiar with the conflicting exercises of experimental religion will be sensible of its value. It was a real service to the Church to have his works collected as they are (including the Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews) in 28 vols. 8vo. and they will furnish the student with ample defences of the gospel against its various enemies. He was too minute and systematic in his distinctions for the largeness of Scriptural truth; but he enters into the depest recesses of the heart, shows clearly the evangelical principles by which sin is to be subdued, and more minutely almost than any other writer displays the various details of holy and devotional feeling. He is here invaluable.

Baxter was another eminent divine of these times, of immense reading and writing also. Perhaps he ought not to be numbered among the Non-conformists. In some measure he was indeed led away by the politics of the times; yet, notwithstanding this and some of his controversial writings, and his Reformed Liturgy, this holy man, when silenced, continued to attend the established church. His practical writings are invaluable; powerful, awakening, with deep views of eternity, and the most heavenly medita-

ions on the future state. The defect of Baxter's practical, or rather *experimental* writings, was such as might be expected from his defects in doctrinal views. We do not now remember (even in his most glowing work, the Saint's Rest) any very glowing views of the amazing love of Christ to the most sinful, and the freeness of his salvation. His method of peace to troubled consciences is circuitous and perplexed, instead of the direct road of simplicity and immediate faith. His Christian Directory is one of his most valuable works. His main power was in his addresses to the conscience, in which he was probably more free and unfettered than most writers. His controversial writings are of various character. His Catholic Theology has much valuable information, and his reasons for the Christian Religion contain an able statement of the Evidences. He had to contend at first with Antinomians, who abused the Gospel: he was a great pacificator, and those things which, in one view, are the highest excellence of character, seem to have led him into most of his mistakes. From an anxious desire to unite all parties, and to guard most carefully against the abuse of the doctrines of grace, he departed from the simplicity of the Gospel, and multiplied the very divisions, which we may well believe it was the desire of his heart to heal. "Mr. Baxter considered the Calvinist and Arminians as reconcileable, making the difference between them of but small account. The scheme of the Arminian appears to me to undermine the doctrines of salvation, by grace alone, and resolve the difference between one sinner and another into the will of man, which is directly opposite to all my views and experience. Nor could I feel a union of heart with those.....who hold with the Gospel being a new remedial law, and represent sinners as contributing to their own conversion."

Mr. Cecil says, "Baxter surpasses all others in the grand, impressive, and persuasive style; but he is not to be named with Owen, as to furnishing the Student's mind. He is, however, multifarious, complex, practical."*

It is painful to see two such eminently holy men, and useful writers, as Owen and Baxter, writing against each other as they do. With a conviction, agreeing with Mr. Cecil, (that Owen is much nearer the truth in doctrine,) it is yet painful to see Owen so severely handle such a man as Baxter, and to see Baxter's recriminations. One is only comforted in the thought of their perfect union above, in together magnifying the riches of that grace which has covered all their asperities. What a lesson may such differences teach us of ceasing from man! We learn similar lessons in the disputes of good men, on points of discipline as well as of doctrine.

But it is impossible to enlarge on each individual. Mr. Hervey sums up their respective characters with happy discrimination. "*Dr. Owen*, with his correct judgment and immense fund of learning. *Mr. Charnock*, with his masculine style and inexhaustible vein of thought. *Dr. Goodwin*, with sentiments truly evangelical, and a most happy talent at opening, sifting, and displaying the hidden riches of Scripture; these are, I think, the first three. Then come *Mr. Howe*, nervous and majestic, with all the powers of imagery at his command. *Dr. Bates*, fluent, polished, with never-ceasing flow of beautiful similitudes. *Mr. Flavel*, fervent and affectionate, with a masterly hand at probing the conscience and striking the passions; *Mr. Caryl*, *Dr. Manton*, *Mr. Pool*, with many others, whose works will speak for them ten thousand times better than the tongue of panegyric, or the pen of biography."

The Divines of the Restoration and Revolution.

We now proceed to the character of

* Mr. Cecil observes in his Remains, "There is something so remarkable in the genius and spirit of the Gospel, that it is not to be understood by any force of speculation and investigation. Baxter attempted this method and found it vain.

Writers of the Established Church at the Restoration, and Revolution, and succeeding periods. The history of Divinity, in the century from the Restoration, to the middle of the 18th century, is by no means cheering to the Christian eye, though it furnishes many a safeguard, and much valuable instruction. Let us trace it in its progress.

Bishop Burnet has many valuable, very valuable qualities as a divine. His pastoral care is exceedingly useful, but his religion was injured, and his spiritual character greatly lowered, by engaging as he did in worldly politics: though the friend of Leighton, he falls very short of Leighton's unction and spirituality. His views of this school will tend to awaken the fears of an evangelical mind, alive to the danger of false philosophy: (Col. ii, 8.) they are the views of a partial and attached friend, one of the class which he describes: a class undoubtedly worthy of the student's attention, and from which much, directly and indirectly, may be learned. The improvements, however, which these excellent men introduced, by no means compensated for their defects of evangelical statements, and their keeping in the back ground the peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

The danger of giving up scriptural expressions, and changing for those we think less offensive, is very great, and the presumption very daring. Witsius speaks justly against the over-refined delicacy of giving up phrases of Scripture for our own fancied smoother and more judicious expressions.

Robert Hall observes, with his accustomed terseness, "If it be replied, Why adhere to an offensive term when its meaning may be expressed in other words, or at least by a more circuitous mode of expression? The obvious answer is, that words and ideas are closely associated, and though ideas give birth to terms, appropriate terms become in their turn the surest safeguard of ideas, insomuch that a truth which is never announced but in a circuitous and circumlocutory form, will either have no hold, or a very feeble one on the public mind. The anxiety with which the precise, the appropriate term is avoided, bespeaks a shrinking, a timidity, a distrust with relation to the idea conveyed by it, which will be interpreted as equivalent to its disavowal." We would press this point because of our strong conviction of the many evils of giving up scripture phraseology. The thing escapes with the term, or is deepened or otherwise in the impression of its importance according to the strength or weakness of the term employed to designate it. What words did Paul use to preach the gospel? 1 Cor. ii, 1, 4, 13. The original cast of the truth of Revelation, naturally seems to require a corresponding originality in the mode of expression through which they are communicated, in order that the ideas intended to be conveyed by them, may as far as possible be precise and determinate.

Bishop Reynolds died in 1676. He is a writer of great value, and deep piety and experience. His sentences are astonishingly terse and full of matter, and his doctrine is throughout evangelical, spiritual, and holy. His commentary on the 14th of Hosea is particularly excellent. His works have been lately republished.

Archbishop Leighton died in 1684. He is one of the very first divines of the British Church, whose writings breathe throughout the spirit of devotion, a noble strain of deep piety, a most humble, heavenly, and loving spirit, an elegant mind, and a scriptural standard of evangelical doctrine.

Bishop Beveridge died in 1708. He himself published only his more learned works, his Catechism, and one or two small pieces: but his executors published many volumes of Sermons, his Private Thoughts, &c., never intended for the press. The whole of his English works have been correctly edited by Mr. Hartwell Horne. His Private Thoughts have been of inestimable service to the Church, from the deep piety and devotion and evangelical sentiments of this excellent bishop.

Archbishop Tillotson, in his private character, seems to have been remarkably sincere and upright,* open and gene-

* Two of his expressions are admirable: "I cannot endure a trick any where, much less in religion."—"Let us never do any thing for religion that is contrary to it."

ous, bearing reproaches patiently, long-
ng for the union of the churches of Christ,
haritable, and above ambition and the
ove of money. Far would we be from
hrowing any doubt on his personal piety;
is very excellencies are the reason why
t is necessary to advert to his erroneous
iews. His writings are singled out, with
hose of Chillingworth, by Mr. Locke,
s eminent examples of perspicuity. He
eems to have been early prejudiced
gainst preaching the doctrines of Chris-
ianity. When he was at Kiddington, in
Suffolk, the parish universally complained
hat Jesus Christ was not preached among
hem—he meets such an accusation in
is sermon on Titus iii, 2. "I foresee
what will be said, because I have heard
t so often said in the like case, that there
s not one word of Jesus Christ in all this.
No more there is in the text; and yet
hope that Jesus Christ is truly preach-
d, whenever his will and laws and the
luties enjoined by the Christian religion
re inculcated upon us." Here was his
grand mistake; and the connections of
is text, both in the close of the former,
nd the following verses, might have
shown him that his view was not cor-
ect. We do not preach Jesus Christ
nerely by preaching his laws. He is far
nore than a Lawgiver, and his laws de-
ive immense energy and force from his
tonement, and are eminently effective
hrough his grace. His views on justifica-
tion (see his Sermon on Justifying Faith)
re far from the views of our Reformers.
After reading it, we are less surprised at
Milner's strong expression, "Grotius on
he continent, and Tillotson in our own
sland, with their numerous followers,
corrupted it (justification by faith) with
ll their might. He objected to the
Athanasian Creed. His sermon on the
eternity of hell torments is seriously ob-
ectionable, as trifling with the plain dec-
arations of Scripture. He seems to
ave been misled by Episcopius, whose
vritings Tillotson's biographer asserts
ontributed much to the forming of some
f the greatest divines of our country, in
he age of which we speak. Did they
ot rather contribute to injure and dete-
iorate the divinity of this age?

Dr. Barrow is a superior writer in the same school.

The powers of his mind were of the highest order; and in his sermons on the passion of Christ, and on his incarnation, we have very able statements of the fundamental truths of the gospel; and his treatise on the Pope's Supremacy, has been said to be the most valuable on that topic in the English language. In his sermons on Faith, there are some magnificent passages; but there are others in which we cannot concur, though he distinctly acknowledges it to be a fruit of the Spirit. In his sermon on Justifying Faith, he speaks of God's being, by Christ, become reconciled, "so as generally to proffer mercy, upon certain reasonable and gentle terms, to all that shall sincerely embrace such overtures of mercy, and heartily resolve to comply with those terms required by him;—namely, the returning and adhering to him, forsaking all impiety and iniquity, and constantly persisting in faithful obedience to his holy commandments." This is not the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. Who shall be saved on the terms of constantly persisting in faithful obedience to his holy commandments!

In the general strain of sentiment, there is, it appears to the Author, a material departure from the character of scriptural divinity. Compare an epistle of St. Paul's and a writer of this class, and you appear to be in another atmosphere. A few remarks on Barrow's Sermons on Industry will illustrate this view. These are admirable Sermons, as comprehending a very valuable mass of weighty and important motives for industry in general, and in our callings as Christians, scholars, and gentlemen. It is a book which may be read through more than once with much advantage; almost every topic relating to the subject seems discussed, and almost every text quoted, but we see not evangelical motives fully developed. The love of Christ, the grand impelling spring of ceaseless activity, and devotedness to him, the grand rule of all industry, are by no means clearly stated, or powerfully pressed. The beauty, the advantages, and the excellence of industry

to the attainment of every thing valuable, it is true, are put in a thousand instructive forms, and here and there a Gospel principle and scriptural examples, are briefly adverted to, but there is vastly more of the views of Gospel truth in the text of Scripture that he quotes, than in many pages of his own matter. Classical authors are quoted by him almost in the same way that he would quote an inspired writer. What Augustine says of Cicero, one is ready to say of him, though certainly in a far more restricted degree; we cease to be captivated by him because the name of Christ does not occur in him. The name of Christ does occur in Dr. Barrow (though far more rarely in these sermons than the Christian would desire,) and in such a sermon as his on the Passions, we are glad to sit at his feet and learn the very best lessons.

The learning and the judgment of Stillingfleet, who died in 1699, were very eminent. His works, in 6 vols. folio, better deserve reprinting than some that have been reprinted. His pieces against Popery are quite an arsenal, furnishing the Protestant with ample armour for repelling the attacks of the subtle and often learned Romanist. Stillingfleet sometimes breaks out in fine evangelical sentiments; but in general rather dwells on the outworks than displays the glory of the interior.

Locke himself is far from being a scriptural writer. It is a strong statement which Mr. Scott makes; he says, "In no book which the author has read, does the pride of human reason opposing the express testimonies of God, and striving to wrest them from their obvious meaning, appear so prominent as in most part of Mr. Locke's Exposition of St. Paul's Epistles." He had a clear and strong mind, with great powers of reasoning. He concurred with the Arminans, and was intimate with their leaders in Holland. His works have been much canvassed, and Lee, Browne, Edwards, and Stillingfleet, and the Author of "Mr. Locke's Religion" have sufficiently proved that he overvalued the powers of the human understanding, and disliked, and disbelieved some of the vital doctrines of Christianity. Whatever desire of peace and union among Christians may have actuated him, we cannot but consider that his influence has been decidedly prejudicial to the pure Gospel of Christ. While we acquit him of open skepticism and infidelity, we cannot acquit him of a tendency to Socinian principles. His works must therefore be read with caution. Locke admits that Jesus Christ gives his Holy Spirit to help us: but is it not the admission of a correct notion, without its becoming a practical principle?

Various controversies arose in this period, which indicate the character of its divinity. One of the most important, the influence of which has reached the present day, was upon the all-important doctrine of justification. Mr. Nelson gives many particulars of this controversy in his life of Bishop Bull, taking the side of the Bishop.

Bishop Bull's book led to many discussions, and was in part or wholly answered or noticed, either expressly, or by meeting the objections substantially, by Gataker, Trueman, Tully, Baxter, Tombes, Owen, and others.

Dr. Sherlock in 1673 published a discourse on the knowledge of Jesus Christ, attacking Dr. Owen's work on communion with God, and maintaining a very lowered and unscriptural tone of religion. This led to Owen's Reply, Alsop's Antisozzo, and Polhill's Answer, with several others, containing, without defending every thing, valuable elucidations of the evangelical doctrines which Sherlock opposed.

From 1680 to 1690 controversies were maintained with great spirit on the subject of Popery which produced an extended defence of the Reformation, and tended to bring Protestants more to Reformation principles.

In 1715 Bishop Hoadly, then Bishop of Bangor, published a Preservative against the principles and practices of the non-jurors, and shortly after preached a sermon on the words, "My kingdom is not of this world," which produced what was called the Bangorian Controversy. He was considered as the patron and champion of misnamed liberal principles. His object was to show that the clergy

had no authority in the government of the church, and the controversy afterwards changed from the rights of the clergy to that of the princes. Law's Reply in his three letters to the Bishop is worth reading; but though it has been said that the controversy tended to confirm our civil and ecclesiastical liberties, it is one in the study of which precious time may be lost, and by which men's minds were diverted from vital principles. The violence of the disputes that arose on these occasions, led to the setting aside of the the Convocation, which has not since acted. Was there not a want of evangelical principles both in high and low church; and was not Christ, the only point of union for all Christians, too much lost sight of? If so, no wonder that eager disputes and wide wasting divisions prevail.

But more serious discussions affecting even the first truths of religion succeeded. The Socinian heresy now began to spread and increase. This is attributed by some to the Act of Toleration; was it not rather owing to the want of evangelical principles in the ministry of the word?* The opposition of Socinians was not met with the evangelical piety, and learning, and wisdom of former days.

The Arian controversy, in this country, arose from Mr. Whitson's publications, in 1710, and the following years, and from Dr. Clarke's Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, in 1712. It led to some valuable vindications of the Trinity, by writers from Dr. Waterland down to Mr. Jones of Nayland, though it is to be regretted that it was defended critically rather than practically, as a theory of immense moment, indeed, but little traced out in the experimental and holy use of it in the Christian life.*

Some farther remarks on writers, who lived at the latter part of this period, will be added, before we give testimonies to the general effects of this decline. There were some lovely characters of primitive piety, such as Bishop Wilson, who died in 1755; men who adorned the Gospel of Christ in their lives, though their writings fail of exhibiting fully the essential doctrines of the Gospel. The divinity current in their days accounts for this deficiency; and there is enough to show that they still did hold these doctrines. Oh! that all who prominently professed them, walked as worthy of the

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* Mr. Bowman gives the following view of the case—"At the beginning of the 18th century Arminianism was sensibly on the decline. It had introduced Socinianism soon after the Restoration, which within a few years prevailed over it; so that Socinians were more numerous than the Arminians. Socinianism ushered in Arianism. But the Socinians having received a check, being publicly stigmatized by the Toleration Act in 1689, were obliged to speak with some caution and reserve. This perhaps was serviceable to the Arian interest, for it soon became predominant and was at the commencement of the present age the fashionable religion."

"Subscription to the Articles was an impediment in the way of the Arians, till one of them declared, 'the Articles may lawfully and conscientiously be subscribed in any sense in which they themselves by their own interpretation can reconcile them to Scripture, without regard to the meaning and interpretation either of the persons who first compiled them, or who now impose them.'" [See Waterland's case of Arian Subscription, p. 8.]

Even the pacific Wake, in a letter to the superintenent of Zurich, in 1719, thus writes—"They to whom the preservation of the Church is committed, and whose duty it is to watch against her enemies, and to reprove, restrain, and punish them, according to their demerits, even these endeavour to overthrow the authority of that Church. These men are highly displeased with all confessions of faith, and with all subscriptions to Articles, and would have a liberty or rather a licence granted for all men, not only to believe, but to speak, write and preach, what they think fit, though the grace of the Holy Spirit, the divinity of Christ, and all other fundamental Articles of our religion should thereby be overturned."

* Thus the sacred writers ever mention it; thus St. Paul states it: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Thus Jude puts it: "Building up yourselves on your most holy *faith*, praying in the *Holy Ghost*, keep yourselves in the love of *God*, looking for the mercy of *our Lord Jesus Christ* unto eternal life." Thus St. Peter: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

Gospel, as did the holy, and devout, and practical Bishop Wilson!*

William Law, who died in 1761, was a powerful writer. With a strong and vigorous intellect, he irresistibly maintains the claim of religion, and shows the inconsistencies of nominal Christians, and urgently exhorts all men to a holy and devout life. But with his views of the reasonableness and necessity of a holy life, and his want of perception of those all-refreshing and comforting views of the Gospel, which distinguish the Apostolic writings and the writings of the Reformers, or at least keeping them, as he did, in the back ground, it is not surprising that he fell into the reveries of Behmen, and ended in mysticism. No strength of mind, no justness of conception as to the importance of practical holiness, can supply the lack of the grace of the Gospel. He who knows us best, and how best to recover us to himself, has provided for us a High Priest, "touched with a feeling of our infirmities," and never can we be brought nigh to God but by him "who is the way, the truth, and the life."

Bishop Warburton was another prelate of these times of remarkable powers of mind and extensive learning. His Julian is a valuable work; and his Alliance of the Church and State, and his divine Legation (however we may differ from some of his main principles,) cannot be read without being sensible of the vigour of his intellect, or without enlarging the mind. It is said that Bishop Bull was his master, and Jeremy Taylor his favourite divine. Yet that it is possible to have all the powers of Warburton, and be greatly in the dark on the truths of the Gospel, is made sufficiently evident, by his Treatise on the Doctrine of Grace. He considered the teaching office of the Holy Ghost to be completed in the Scriptures; and that his sanctifying and comforting offices are chiefly confined to charity.

The writers of this class still hold some main doctrines of the Gospel. Even Dr. Clarke maintains the atonement, and admits the gift of the Spirit as needful for all Christians, in every age, to produce moral dispositions and habits of mind; but, in the striking description of Cecil, "Clarke has above all other men the faculty of lowering the life and spiritual sense of Scripture to such perfection, as to leave it like dry bones, divested of every particle of marrow or oil."

It was an indication of the low state to which divinity had sunk, that a Bishop of our Church, useful by his replies to Payne and Gibbon, should publish such a collection as Bishop Watson did in 1785, of Theological Tracts for the instruction of younger students in divinity. His list of books recommended to the clergy manifests this inferior state of religion. There is learning enough indeed, and that truly valuable, but comparatively little of that evangelical, experimental, and spiritual class of books, which faithful ministers find so eminently useful, and much of that which is merely critical. Works tending to, if not directly Socinian, are praised; while works of high value, such as Calvin's Commentaries, are unnoticed.

This departure from the principles of Christianity was very injurious to real learning. We find not the extent of re-

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* This godly Bishop's Prayer will be acceptable to the pious student.

BEFORE STUDY.

O God! the fountain of all wisdom! in a deep sense of my own ignorance, and of the great charge which lies upon me, I am constrained to come often before thee, from whom I have learned whatever I know, to ask that help without which I shall disquiet myself in vain. Most humbly beseeching thee to guide me with thine eye, and enlighten my mind, that I may see myself, and teach others the wonders of thy law; that I may learn from thee what I ought to think and speak concerning thee. Direct and bless all the labours of my mind; give me a discerning spirit, a sound judgment, and an honest and religious heart; and grant that in all my studies my *first* aim may be to set forth thy glory, and to set forward the salvation of mankind; that I may give a comfortable account of my time at the great day, when all our labours shall be tried.

And if thou art pleased that by my ministry sinners shall be converted, and thy kingdom enlarged, give me the grace of humility, that I may never ascribe the success to myself, but to thy Holy Spirit, which enables me to will and to do according to thy good pleasure. Grant this, O Father of all light and truth! for the sake of Jesus Christ.

search, the depth of thought, and the accumulated knowledge of former ages in the writers of this period. Archbishop Secker, in his Synodal Oration in 1761 observes, that "the present age is not sufficiently given to reading books, especially the more ancient and those of more profound argument, nor to deep thought or laborious writing."

This departure was, as might be expected, accompanied with a loss of the holy influence of real Christianity.

This decay in piety has been testified by many of acknowledged excellence. Bishop Berkley says, in a sermon preached in 1731, "From the time that divinity was considered as a science, and human reason enthroned in the sanctuary of God, the hearts of its professors seem to have been less under the influence of grace."

Bishop Butler, in the Advertisement to his Analogy, published in 1736, says—"It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much an object of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.*

Archbishop Secker, in his Sermons, (Vol. I, p. 59,) says, perhaps about 1758, "It is a reproach, I believe peculiar to the Christians of this age and nation, that many of them seem ashamed of their Christianity, and excuse their piety as others do their vices." This was not more injurious to piety than it was to the established Church. In one of his charges, Archbishop Secker says, "We have in fact lost many of our people to sectaries by not preaching in a manner sufficiently evangelical."

Bishop Lavington may be introduced as another unexceptionable testimony on this point. He says, addressing the clergy, (somewhere about 1750,) "My brethren, I beg you will rise up with me against moral preaching. We have long been attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. With what success? None at all. On the contrary we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice. We must preach Christ and him crucified. Nothing but the Gospel is, nothing besides will be found to be, the "power of God unto salvation." Let me therefore again and again request, may I not add, let me charge you, to preach Jesus and salvation through his name."

Bishop Horne says, in his Apologies published in 1756, "It is the complaint of hundreds of serious Christians, that there is at present a lamentable falling off from the OLD way of preaching and expounding the word of God." In alluding to critical works, (which he perhaps too much undervalued,) he "thought it of disservice to turn the minds of men more to the letter of the Bible, when they were already too much turned away from the spirit of it. The best fruits of divine wisdom may be gathered from the word of God in any language, and in any edition. To what the Scripture itself calls the spirit of the Scripture, the learned of late days were become much more inattentive than in past ages." He mentions Clarke, Hoadley, Hare, Middleton, Warburton, Sherlock, South, W. Law, Edmund Law, and many others, who fell totally into other ways of studying and reasoning.

Dean Milner remarks, in the life of his brother published in 1802, "Formerly this country abounded with divines who were strenuous and able advocates for the Establishment, who were orthodox in their faith, and who also were diligent and zealous in the practical application of their principles. Of late years there have not been wanting orthodox members of the Church, who have also shown themselves powerful defenders of ecclesiastical institutions; but the persons of this description have not usually

* The Rev. D. Wilson has published a very valuable Introduction to Butler's Analogy. It fully proves that this able writer who thus describes the growth of infidelity, was deficient in clearly inculcating the doctrines of the Gospel, and shows in a particular instance, very much the nature of that general decline which we are now considering.

been industrious, earnest, plain, and practical preachers of the essential articles of the Christian faith. They seem to have contented themselves with supporting the outworks of religion, and with occasional declarations of orthodoxy, and almost to have forgotten that whatever in its aim stops short of thoroughly awakening the consciences of men, of subduing their natural corruptions, and of producing "a peculiar people zealous of good works," is not the gospel of Christ, that power of God unto salvation" which St. Paul preached. He afterwards speaks of this as amounting on the part of many of the clergy to a *dangerous departure* from sound doctrine: but states that it prevailed some thirty or forty years ago, more than then.

Infidelity arose and flourished in the decline of gospel principles. The way in which infidels were met equally marks the decline. The best mode of opposing Hobbes and Shaftesbury does not seem to have been adopted. They were answered mainly on the grounds of reason. Christ with all his blessings, as manifesting his divine glory, and alone meeting every varied want of fallen man, was little exhibited as the grand internal evidence of religion. The Bible was rather defended, than used and improved. This great deficiency is too much the characteristic of the admirable defences of the outworks in the able works of Leland.

We would be far from denying the piety, or, to a certain extent, the usefulness of the writers to whom we have referred. Many of them were deeply religious. A little light may guide a man to heaven who follows that light, while he who neglects to do so, may perish in the full blaze of the Gospel. Perhaps this class has been undervalued by some. A wise student will gladly avail himself of all real helps. To improve the mode of stating divine truth by a clearer and plainer style of writing, and by greater simplicity, was very desirable. It was a praiseworthy effort to free religion from the trammels of a show of learning, and of merely human distinctions. The defence of the outworks of religion and sacred criticism, have been much advanced by writers who have been of little use as practical divines. The writings of those who have but rarely refreshed the hearts with a fine glow of evangelical sentiment are still exceedingly useful in these and many other respects. And though we must ever remember, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, Jesus Christ," yet very different superstructures may be built upon it.

How insufficient every human scheme is, (however commended by all that is amiable and learned, and however designed to guard against real abuses,) how utterly ineffective every system, except the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dying for sinners, to maintain and carry forward the Church of God! The merely rational system of religion without the peculiarities of the Bible, is both inefficient and injurious. Talk they of policy? the simplicity of scriptural truth is the best policy. See what it did in Luther. You may perhaps, by human wisdom, escape the reproach of the cross, gain the admiration of man, rise to the highest ranks of human honor and emolument, but you part with truth, you lose your usefulness, you deteriorate the Gospel, and you injure the cause of God. You may have the star-light of a cold frosty night, but you lose the cheering, enlivening, and fructifying warmth of the glorious sun. What if the outworks are defended, where is the advantage, if those within the citadel withhold from us the privileges and the blessings of the kingdom. May the witnesses for Christ never hand down to posterity a lifeless, inefficient, and human system, which thousands shall unprofitably follow instead of the life-giving, and divine Gospel, the power of God, unto salvation!

There was a similar decline in *Scotland.* Witherspoon, in his Ecclesiastical Characteristics, with a fine vein of irony and delicate humour, exposes this. His descriptions relate to the state of the Scotch church in the middle of the eighteenth century, and from this account, it appears to have been as low as the English church at that time. He observes that it was a necessary part of the character of a moderate man, never,

but with a sneer, to speak of the Confession of Faith (the standard of divinity in the Scotch church;) to confine his subjects to social duties, recommend them only from rational considerations, and draw his authorities chiefly from heathen writers.

Amidst declines on the *Continent*, the Pietists seem to have been much honored in promoting vital religion. The main instruments of this, were Arndt (who died in 1685,) Spencer (who died in 1705,) and Frank (who died in 1727.) They were instruments of effecting a partial revival of religion which produced considerable effect, and was connected with a purer tone of divinity.

Modern Writers.

It will be generally allowed, that there has been an extended revival of scriptural divinity within the last century. Its commencement was, as usual in God's dispensations, with a few individuals.

Dr. Buchanan speaks thus on the subject: "It was about the middle of the last century that *Infidelity*, which had appeared long before, first began to show itself in strong and general operation. It was at a time when the light of Christianity was very feeble, and it was apprehended that this new adversary would totally extinguish it. But behold the providence of God! at this very period there was a revival of religion in England, commencing in the bosom of our own church. Distinguished preachers arose in succession, men possessing the spirit and eloquence of the first Reformers; and 'the doctrine of the blessed Apostle and evangelist St. John,' was preached with great energy and effect; multitudes of the people bearing witness by their repentance and conversion to its truth and heavenly power. And it was soon found to be the pure and operative faith of the Primitive Church and of the Reformation; differing as much from mere profession as the substance from the shadow, and bearing the true character which cannot be feigned, namely, righteousness in life, and peace in death. At the very time when the spirit of infidelity was fostering its strength under the name of philosophy, and preparing for the awful revolutions which followed, the spiritual religion of Christ began to revive, and has since produced the most beneficial effects."

It may be well more distinctly to mark the progress of this revival, and let us take the account of an eminent instrument in carrying it forward—the Rev. Joseph Milner; as it regards both his own case and the general state of the Church.

The Author has in his possession a letter from the late Joseph Milner, to Mr. Newton, dated in Sept. 1771, where, speaking of the great evil of mixing the Gospel with philosophy, an evil which he had personally felt, he adds, "Cambridge Metaphysics I am obliged to for much of that enmity and reasoning that have distressed me. In vain did I desire, when God showed me the Gospel, in some measure to preserve a good understanding between the Scripture and King's Origin of Evil, Locke, Clarke, and other Metaphysicians, which I had read with greediness, digested with kind affection, and remembered, and still remember, with obstinate retention. The affair of free-will particularly has cost me many a pang. In short, by bitter experience, rather than reasoning, I have been convinced, that if man be saved, it must be by free-grace, in the proper and full sense of the words. What signifies reasoning against facts? I found I could not believe, I could not perform duties, I was sure to break every resolution; I could not change my heart, I was overborne irresistibly, and disappointed in all I attempted. I hope you go on with your people rejoicing in the Lord, and that more and more souls are brought over to know Jesus Christ. Here the Gospel is in an infant state, yet has it pleased the Lord to bless my labors in a good degree, and direct them to His own glory: dark myself, I have been made the means of giving light to others; and when I have been myself so little affected with what I have said, that I have been accusing myself of hypocrisy, how have I been astonished at the power with which it has been made to strike others."

The author has also in his possession

a manuscript sermon of the late Mr. Milner, on Matt. ix, 36—38, (written probably about the same time,) in which urging the duty of prayer for *more* faithful ministers, he says, "Look now at a parish, for instance, in which ungodliness, ignorance, and wickedness reign—where the sheep go astray continually, and the shepherd along with them, void himself of any Christian intelligence, and sensibility, and unwilling that his people should have any. The sun shines not on more miserable and more pitiable objects. Pastor and People in this case have scarce an idea of any better situation in religion. In such places, vices of all sorts reign without control, and the Christian religion appears a thing of no importance. You know it is no fancy picture I have been drawing, there are many such parishes in the land." He speaks of numbers of parishes, nay, large tracts in the kingdom, as still walking in darkness and wickedness. He then gives some account of the revival of religion in his day, as an additional motive for prayer—"a great and effectual door is already opened in the Church of England, and the light breaks forth as the morning within her pale. Certainly every candid observer must see that there are at present many more useful, intelligent, and laborious ministers than there were twenty or thirty years ago. Yet the opposition is great, and we are but in the infancy of things.

These extracts will give some insight into the beginning of that gracious effusion of the Holy Spirit, which has happily distinguished the present time, and has produced an extensive revival of religion.

It arose in the middle of the eighteenth century, chiefly in the Established Church though Watts and Doddridge, among dissenters, prepared the way. Some of those with whom it commenced continued with the utmost consistency of conduct their labours in the Church, as Hervey, Walker, Toplady, Romaine, Adam and Milner; others, as *Whitfield* and *Wesley*, &c. were led by the low state of religion in the country to a more irregular system of action. All, notwithstanding minor differences, according to the gifts bestowed on them and the spheres in which they moved, laboured indefatigably to spread the main truths of the Bible, and of the Reformation.

Those who were chiefly honoured in accomplishing this work, were not men of extended learning or deep research; or having the extraordinary powers of understanding, which distinguished Augustine, Luther, and Calvin. Speaking of the revival of the Reformation in our land at this day, as the last effusion of the Spirit of God, and pointing out the weakness and obscurity of the instruments by which it has been wrought, Milner says, "I question whether human learning and sagacity were ever less employed in a religious work since the Apostle's days. It should be an instructive lesson to the learned and wise of this kingdom, that while they have scarcely contributed any thing, persons of lower rank and attainments have been instrumental in reclaiming thousands." From this fact Milner then takes occasion to put a guard against enthusiasm on the one hand, and reasoning pride on the other.

The doctrine of justification was now revived afresh from all the incumbrances with which the learning of Bishop Bull, the metaphysical mind of Baxter, and the unscriptural statements of Tillotson and his followers had oppressed it, and was proclaimed in its simplicity and purity as the divine and healing doctrine of the Gospel. As usual, Satan when he could not smother the flame, sought again to give it a wrong direction. It is fully allowed that in this revival there were extravagances and errors, but the true reason of those is not to be found so much in their labours who revived religion as in the negligence of those who had suffered the people to grow up in ignorance and indifference. A population thus neglected, when suddenly awakened to a sense of religion, easily fell into the snares of the enemy, who ever mingles tares with the wheat. Such works as Warburton's Doctrine of Grace, and Lavington's Enthusiasm, in fact thus condemn not only the enthusiam of the people, but the negligence of their previous pastors. This revival was not confined to England. Brown, Erskine, and others in Scotland

were greatly blessed of God. A similar revival took place in America; Dr. Green, the President of New Jersey College, observes, "It is known to those who are acquainted with the state of religion in this country (America) about the middle of last century, that a great and general attention to religion was at that time excited in a large part of what were then called the British Provinces of North America. The celebrated George Whitfield was chiefly instrumental in producing the religious impressions which were then so extensively and generally felt."

The Author feels very incompetent, on various grounds, to enter into a review of even the leading writers in general in this period, and it would carry him beyond the designed limits of the present work to attempt to do so. He would merely notice one or two of the more devotional and practical, or decidedly evangelical authors, whose works may be useful to the student.

Bishop Horne died in 1792. His Commentary on the Psalms has long been a refreshing and delightful companion in the Christian's retirement. His sermons are polished, and have many beautiful and excellent thoughts, but they are wanting in the full declaration of justification by grace, and therefore meet not adequately the distresses of an awakened conscience.

Jonathan Edwards died in 1758. He is a writer of great originality and piety, and with extraordinary mental powers. His Treatises on the freedom of the will, on the affections, on original sin, his History of Redemption, and Life of Brainerd, abundantly manifest this: and without concurring in every statement, and allowing that there is a dryness in the treatment of some of his subjects, and that metaphysical difficulties are not cleared up after all his arguments, yet there is a strength of mind, a soundness of principle, a holiness of purpose, an elevation of devotion, and an evangelical glow in his more spiritual writings, which will ever make him a valuable author. He, in fact, commenced a new and higher school in divinity to which many subsequent writers, Erskine, Fuller, Newton, Scott, Ryland, the Milners, Dwight, and indeed the great body of evangelical authors who have since lived, have been indebted. His discourses on Justification are among the best on that all-important, but in its varied connexions and bearings, difficult doctrine.

Romaine, who died in 1795, was one of the earliest of those writers to whom we owe that revival of religion in our own country, of which we have been speaking. He had considerable learning as well as remarkably clear evangelical views, and few books have been more circulated than his Treatises on Faith, which are full of evangelical and devotional statements. He was strongly attached to the established church.

Milner, of Hull, who died in 1797, will ever be valued by the Christian mind for his History of the Church of Christ, an inestimable treasure of evangelical truth and Christian experience, continuing the History of the Church of Christ, in the very spirit of the sacred writers, as far as human infirmity can tread in their steps. His sermons also are searching, and yet full of the Gospel. His answer to Gibbon not only exposes the sophistry of that infidel historian, but gives the true character of the religion which he had attempted to undermine. Milner's works altogether are full of instruction to the student.

Mr. Jones of Nayland, who died in 1800, is in many respects a valuable writer, and his Treatise on the Trinity is one of the most satisfactory defences of that fundamental doctrine, on the simple testimony of the Holy Scriptures. His figurative Language of Scripture, Book of Nature, and other practical works are (notwithstanding the excess of Figurative interpretation) interesting and useful; but towards Dissenters and Calvinists he is painfully bitter. Following Charles Leslie's example, he takes partial and unfair views. Such views aggravate an evil which they design to remedy. The Author, however, is delighted to be able to add, on the testimony of a pious friend, (a relative of Mr. Jones,) that in his latter days his prejudices were much softened, and he courted the society of one of more de-

cidedly evangelical sentiments, whom formerly he had despised, and viewed rather with hostility than friendship.

Newton died in 1807. His conversion was remarkable, and his works manifest that rich Christian experience which such a course as his, under the Divine Spirit, was adapted to give. His letters show great knowledge of the heart, and furnish excellent lessons of Christian wisdom.

Fuller died in 1815. He was a writer among the Baptists, but of the same good school of divinity as Scott. With a lively imagination and all the powers of a masculine mind, he maintains the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel, and insists on its practical holiness.

Scott died in 1821. He was a man of a strong, reflecting, and original mind, gradually compelled, under the teaching of the Divine Spirit, to bow to the force of scriptural truth, and then firmly and steadily following and serving that truth. He was thrown among Antinomians, and was fully alive to all the dangers of their pestilent error. His Commentary was a noble gift to the Church of Christ, and furnishes us with the solid interpretation of a man of a powerful mind and great good sense, giving his own views wisely, freely, and plainly.

Some who did not hold evangelical principles at first, embraced them afterwards. Thus Paley, in a Visitation Sermon, preached July 17, 1777, on the question, What the expressions in Scripture, regenerate, born of the Spirit, new creatures, mean?—answers, "Nothing! that is, nothing to us! nothing to be found or sought for in the present circumstances of Christianity!" It is very gratifying, however, to know that Paley's views materially changed on this topic before he died; and that, among the sermons directed to be printed after his death, are the following much more scriptural views on conversion. In a sermon, Matt. ix, 13, he says: "Of the persons in our congregations, to whom we not only may but must preach the doctrine of conversion plainly and directly, are those who, with the name indeed of Christians, have hitherto passed their lives without any internal religion whatever; who have not at all thought upon the subject, &c. &c. these persons are really in as unconverted a state as any Jew or Gentile could be in our Saviour's time....These must be converted before they can be saved; the course of their thoughts must be changed, the very principles upon which they act must be changed;....There must be a revolution within. A change so entire, so deep, and so important as this, I do allow to be a conversion; and no one who is in the situation above described, can be saved without undergoing it; and he must necessarily both be sensible of it at the time, and remember it all his life afterward. It is too momentous an event ever to be forgotten. A man might as easily forget his escape from a shipwreck."

The attacks of the enemies of revelation, as usual, called forth able replies. Infidel writers were met by Leland, Bishop Watson, Dr. Beattie, Paley, and Scott, with many others. The attacks of Dr. Priestley on the main doctrines of the Bible, from 1775 to 1804, led to many successful defences. Those of Bishop Horsely, of the English, and Dr. Jamieson, of the Scotch Church, remain as bulwarks of the faith.

The Refutation of Calvinism, by Bishop Tomline, led to Mr. Scott's Reply, and Dr. Williams's Defence.

Bishop *Horseley's* powers of mind were of a high order; and his sermons, and his other works will render assistance to the student chiefly in the way of criticism. He had the integrity and candor to speak decidedly against the ignorance of many who opposed what they called Calvinistic views.

It has been noticed that this revival extended to America. The writings of Witherspoon, Bellamy, Hopkins, Davies, and others; the republication of British works, and the labors of American preachers, seem to have been attended with revivals of religion, and the happiest success.

America has continued to furnish valuable divines. Dwight's Theology, while we agree not in its statements on church government, and long to see in it more of that divine unction which draws the

heart to the full enjoyment of communion with God in Christ, is still the work of a powerful and original mind, holding scriptural views of divine truth. Several valuable critical works have recently appeared in America.

The better state of things commenced in Germany by the Pietists, and fostered, as we have observed before, has been growing amid the opposition of infidelity and neologian principles (another name for infidelity,) and amid all the troubles of the continental wars; still there seems reason to hope for brighter and better days in these first scenes of the Reformation.

The revival of religion in our country had to encounter much opposition. Many a charge, many a visitation sermon, many a pamphlet, many a periodical publication, and some more bulky works, professing complete refutation, have been issued against its instruments; but these attacks calling forth able replies, have only strengthened and enlarged that which they were meant to overthrow.

The chain of evangelical writers has continued unbroken to our day. Serle, Robinson, Cecil, the Venns, Buchanan, Richardson, and others departed, have left writings that will long continue to edify the Church. It may be noticed also, that many evangelical principles (such as the all-important one of justification by faith) are much more generally admitted by all classes.

The Wesleyans, as a body, have not been without their share of valuable writings, as many of the works of Wesley, Fletcher, Benson, Drew, and others, sufficiently show.

Modern dissenters have fully partaken of the improvements of the times, and many of their works furnish invaluable helps in theology. The doctrinal Articles of the church of England are strenuously upheld by the great body of pious dissenters. Not to allude to living authors, Gill, Booth, Lavington, Bogue, Williams, Ryland, with many others that might be mentioned, have left writings that, making every allowance for diversity of sentiments on inferior points, will furnish much information and edification to the student.

Scotland has also furnished its help to sound divinity in this age. The writings of Professor Campbell, though not distinguished for a rich exhibition of the grace of the Gospel, are manifestly the works of an upright, conscientious mind: those of the Erskines, Jamieson, and Maclaurin, are of a higher cast, and will amply repay perusal: Brown of Haddington, will ever be a favourite author, from his extensive scriptural knowledge.

Some have seriously feared that the revival of which we have spoken, and which has hitherto but partially prevailed in the British churches, has already begun to decline. It is true that the profession of evangelical principles has spread much more widely, and thence the waters may not be so deep. There is always through human corruption a tendency to deterioration. Are not Christians now too anxious to make every thing clear to reason? It is a day of concession, and there is danger of conceding vital points. Classes of men are not so distinct. Faithful Christians are not so separate and united. There is less of the reproach of the cross, and this may not spring from the greater diffusion of religion, but from the greater laxity of the religious.

It may assist us in forming a comparative judgment of the present state of divinity, to contrast some publications of a similar class which have been published in different periods of the Church. There are three works (the Whole Duty of man, published about the middle of the 17th century; the New Whole Duty of Man, published 50 or 60 years after, and Venn's Complete Duty of Man, published on the revival of religion) which illustrate the character of the divinity of their respective æras. The Whole Duty of Man, was a practical book, to counteract the Antinomians, and contains an impressive introduction on the care of the soul; the devotional part is full and useful, and it has a good statement of relative duties, but it does not exhibit prominently the only principles and strength on which man can perform them. The New Whole Duty, attempting to remedy this, by bringing forward the faith as well as the duty of the Chris-

tian, has completely departed from the principles of the Reformation, and is a very dangerous and unsound book. Let the following extract from the preface suffice. "Our Saviour by his sufferings and death has purchased this grace for us, that real repentance and sincere obedience shall be accepted instead of innocence. Not that the condition of the Gospel covenant is a perfect unsinning obedience, but a sincere endeavour to obey all the commands of God to the utmost of our power, which commands in their general and most proper sense, are so far from being impossible to be observed, that on the contrary, a man cannot easily transgress them without a hardened conscience, and a deliberate choice. And whensoever God requires of us more than we are naturally able to perform, he never fails to afford us proportionably great assistance to enable us to perform what he so requires." Nothing can be more unscriptural, and uncharacteristic of the Gospel, or more contrary to our Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy. Compare this account with the 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th Articles. In Venn's Complete Duty of Man, we return again to the principles of the Reformation. He exhibits clearly, justification by faith, and the vital doctrines of the Gospel, but though doctrinally an improvement, yet it is defective as a complete substitute in the statement of practical duties.

REFLECTIONS.

In the midst of every outward advantage, how absolutely necessary is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in order to the revival or progress of pure religion. The days of tranquility which returned with the Revolution in 1688, did not bring with them the spirit of evangelical simplicity and piety which animated the Reformers. The increase of knowledge from the labours of Bacon, and Newton, and many a mighty mind, was not accompanied with a corresponding increase of faith, and hope, and love, in the Church. Oh may we feel that all our literary advantages in the present day may be a snare and a hindrance to the vital prosperity of our souls, if they lead us from simply looking upward to the Divine Teacher of the Church. "How is it," says Mr. Cecil, "that some men labour in divine things night and day, but labour in vain? How is it that men can turn over the Bible from end to end to support errors and heresies, absurdities and blasphemies? They take not the *Spirit* with the *Word*. A spiritual understanding must be given, a gracious perception, a right taste."

How wonderful has been the providence of God, in bringing clear exhibitions of his truth, from the very malice and subtlety of the great enemy who stirred up men to oppose that truth. Without alluding to our own times, Celsus writes against Christianity, and hence originates the defence of Origen. Arius opposes the Trinity, and it is more firmly established than ever by Athanasius. Pelagius opposes divine grace, and by Augustine the important doctrine is cleared up from many plausible objections: not but that there always will be objections while man has a proud, cavilling heart. Rom. ix, 19, 20. The papists seek to establish human merit, and give occasion for the full elucidation of the fundamental article of justification by faith. God shows how vain, weak, and foolish are the talent, genius, and learning of man; and how great the power, life, and glory of his own uncorrupted truth. The insufficiency of human wisdom, and the excellence of the divine wisdom thus receive continual illustration, and fresh light from age to age beams from the Holy Scriptures to enlighten and cheer a benighted world. We need not fear then the opposition of learned philosophers, classics, and scholars, to the simple truth of the Gospel. They must all bow down at last before God's truth. He has raised up and he will continue to raise up higher minds and more learned than they to maintain his cause, even men divinely taught by his Spirit.

These heresies were over-ruled, not only for the clearer exhibition of Christian truth, but also for the maintenance of Christian stedfastness, and the manifestation of Christian sincerity: "there

must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." 1 Cor. xi, 19. They have excited also a deeper and more diligent study into the word of God.

It may, we think, be observed, that those have been most successful in doing good, who have most distinctly exhibited the blessings of religion. The Gospel is good tidings of great joy. The author fully goes along with Mr. Cecil, when he says, "Let there be no extremes: yet I am arrived at this conviction:—Men who lean towards the extremes of evangelical *privileges* in their ministry, do much more to the conversion of their hearers than they do who lean towards the extreme of *requirement*. And my own experience confirms my observation. I feel myself repelled if any thing chills, loads, or urges me. This is my nature, and I see it very much the nature of other men. But let me hear, "Son of man, thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to me saith the Lord"—I am melted and subdued.

Indeed in point of fact, the best writers on privilege most minutely display the Christian's practical conduct, and holy tempers and dispositions find their main spring in the rich privileges of the Church. "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

It is very dangerous to depart from the proportion of faith, and to pass beyond the wise and holy limits with which the sacred Scriptures encompass every doctrine; when we get out of the bounds of Scripture, we wander in thick darkness, and through endless mazes of error. Thus on the doctrine of the Trinity we may easily pass into Tritheism, or sink into Arianism. On the doctrine of predestination, we may easily press our views so far as to hold Fatalism on the one hand, or deny the foreknowledge of God on the other. On the doctrine of imputed righteousness, we may in our mode of putting it, make even the atonement of Christ unnecessary on the one hand, and repentance, contrition, and humiliation on the other. As every virtue is surrounded with opposite vices, so every doctrine is surrounded with opposite errors. "If any man prophesy, let him prophesy according to the proportion of faith; if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

With what extreme difficulty has that blessed doctrine, justification by faith only, been preserved from age to age unimpaired, and in its purity! One would have thought, that after the Reformation, the Protestant Churches could hardly again have almost lost a doctrine which was then so fully established, and so distinctly and clearly embodied in their confessions. But it is one very opposed to our darkened understanding, and it can only be adequately understood and valued in the humbling school of Christian experience. Many too, doubtless, hold it substantially, who do not hold it in theory, or expression. May Christians ever have a jealous care over this jewel of the Gospel of Christ. Experience has shown that this is a most wholesome doctrine, as well as very full of comfort. The suspicions of the natural understanding are proved to be groundless by the history of the Church. Bishop Horsley, in his first Charge, observes, "That man is justified by faith without the works of the law, was the uniform doctrine of our first Reformers. It is a far more ancient doctrine—it was the doctrine of the whole college of Apostles: it is more ancient still, it was the doctrine of the prophets; it is older than the prophets—it was the religion of patriarchs, and no one who has the least acquaintance with the writings of the first Reformers will impute to them more than to the patriarchs, the prophets, or apostles, the absurd opinions, that any man leading an impenitent wicked life will finally, upon the mere pretence of faith, (and faith connected with an impenitent life must always be a mere pretence,) obtain admission into heaven."

Many are the lessons which we are taught, as to the causes and symptoms of a decline of religion, and it is all-important to retard its fall and forward its re-

vival by every means in our power. It will have been observed, that all bodies of Christians have at least for a season, fallen from their primitive purity. What have been the causes? The grand cause manifestly is the corruption of the human heart. The taking religious opinions rather on the authority of great and good names, than on that which is divine, is another cause of decline—God's holy word. 1 Cor. ii, 5. Thus human faith is gendered, and not that divine faith which gains the victory over all our spiritual enemies.

This important subject calls for farther illustration. We see something of it in the decay of religion in the successive generations of a pious family. The effects which have arisen from pious parents thrusting their children into the ministry, show the same thing. It was said in the preceding century, "Some of the greatest perverters of the Gospel during the last century have descended from pious parents, who, fond of the idea of bringing up their children to the public service of God, overlooked the necessity of personal religion, presuming, as it would seem, that God would in due time supply that."

We have had painful occasion to see that many have admitted right sentiments, who do not, as far as man can judge, live under the personal experience and enjoyments of those sentiments. Without noticing unworthy motives, we may in many cases believe that their real learning, their candor of mind, and their sincerity of character, have led them to avow doctrines which they perceived to be scriptural; but it is greatly to be feared that their religion is the religion of intellect without corresponding feelings; the religion of an outward orthodoxy, without the living principles having their due influence over the affections. The deity and the atonement of Christ, for instance, are admitted and are strenuously maintained against Socinians; but the glory of those doctrines, as discovering to us one able to save to the uttermost, and procuring for us a complete salvation, are not traced out in their practical application, as unspeakably important in the temptations, the distresses, the burdens, and the conflicts of the Christian life. Real Christianity is the religion of the heart, as well as of the intellect; God "hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The outward defence of the truth is not to be undervalued. Christians have been shielded from many reproaches and much contempt by the learned works of men, whose general spirit and conduct has, alas! been such as to free them from the reproach of the cross, and all suspicion of enthusiasm, and who have too manifestly been of the world, to be hated by the world. They have had, we will say, the ingenuousness of mind to admit the great essential doctrines of the Gospel; nay, we may go farther and say, they have assisted the real Christian by the powerful intellectual defence of doctrines, of which it is to be feared they themselves had not that full experimental enjoyment, which to the Christian was another most satisfactory evidence of their truth. Let us never rest in a bare orthodoxy of sentiment. Our creed may be perfectly right in the intellect, and our heart seriously wrong, because it never truly received it. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is real Antinomianism to rest satisfied with an orthodox creed, whether that creed comprehend many or few articles of faith, if those articles are destitute of holy influence on the heart and in the life.

Has not the Church of God seen these things painfully exemplified on a large scale among almost every class of Christians in every age of the Church? Have not the Protestant churches on the continent and in the British Islands witnessed the same distressing facts in their own history?

The great lesson which this teaches, is the supreme importance of a daily, constant, humble and prayerful searching of the Word of God, by every Christian Student.

The decay of religion however, mainly arises from, and is an indication of the tremendous power of that inward corruption which breaks through all barriers and rises over all bounds. It becomes at the same time another occasion and furnishes

another evidence of the freedom, and riches, and fulness of that grace which is in Christ Jesus. He, against all this powerful tendency still raises up afresh, by fresh effusions of the Holy Ghost, faithful witnesses from time to time, with a new experience of the truth in their own conversion to God, boldly to testify the Gospel of his grace. The faithful witness too is then enabled, by those abused and neglected confessions, to take a firmer stand and be strengthened and bulwarked against all attacks, and thus a new life and power is given to the form, and the whole church is revived.

We may observe that religion does not ordinarily flourish most when its professors have most worldly honour and outward advantage. It is true that in the primitive time, when the churches "had rest, they were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied:" but this was in a peculiar day, and under a peculiar effusion of the Holy Ghost. The general history of the Church shows how little even the best of men can bear power, dominion, and prosperity. God has wisely chosen in general a humble lot for his people, and leaves mostly to the world that which the world so eagerly pursues, the kingdoms and glory of this world. Seldom do Christians gain a large measure of riches or dominion, of science or learning without seriously suffering in their best interests. Those who are thus raised in the world, and at this cost, have rather need of our prayers than our congratulations.

These reflections cannot be concluded better than in the striking words of Bishop Stillingfleet—"Christ crucified is the library which triumphant souls will be studying to all eternity. This is the only library which is the true *Ιατρειον ψυχης*, that which cures the soul of all its maladies and distempers: other knowledge makes men's minds giddy and flatulent; this settles and composes them: other knowledge is apt to swell men into high conceits and opinions of themselves, this brings them to the truest view of themselves, and thereby humility and sobriety: other knowledge leaves men's minds as it found them; this alters them and makes them better. So transcendent an excellency is there in the knowledge of Christ crucified, above the sublimest speculations in the world."

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